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TREATISE

CONCERNING

RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS.

BY

JONATHAN EDWARDS, A.M.

WITH

AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

BY THE

REV. DAVID YOUNG,
PERTH.

SECOND EDITION.

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

It is painfully instructive to reflect on the extent to which the depravity of man is at once indicated and aggravated, by the irreclaimable waywardness of his propensities and passions. By carrying this thought into the department of religion, we shall see the expounding principle of his depravity laid open to us; and, while there may still be a mystery over the origin of this principle, which remains to be cleared away by other evidence, yet we shall find it manifest, that man is the enemy of God by wicked works, by being previously his enemy in the spirit of his mind. But although we were to make a more confined use of the thought, and apply it only to those actions in which there is supposed to be no direct impiety, and which are interdicted by Christianity only in their excesses, or seasons, or circumstances, we shall still find an element working in the human mind—more mildly in some, and more fiercely in others,—which argues disease in its moral constitution. The creatures which are merely animal are guided by instinct, and they are guided securely by it—maintaining a perfect uniformity, exhibiting a

thorough consistency in their likings and aversions, and prosecuting both with amazing steadiness, in subserviency to their real enjoyments: or, if there be an instance of deviation, to any observable extent, in any individual of any one of their species, that instance is marked, and wondered at, as a singularity; which shows at once how rarely it occurs, and how little power it has to shake our confidence in that, which with them is the ordinary course of nature.

With man, however, the case is vastly different. Not only is he led astray by that which ought to be the glory of his nature, but even the law of instinct is baffled and bewildered, enfeebled by resistance, or vitiated by perversity, till it is no longer capable of a right appropriation of terrestrial things. Viewing him simply as made for this world, and keeping the specialities of religion altogether out of the question, there is still room for the assertion, that he is unaccountably the creature of extremes; to be found in almost any state of mind except that one which tends most directly to promote his comfort. But the spring of all this extravagance is the violence of undisciplined propensity. We see his tendency to excess unfolding itself, and involving him in manifold little perplexities, as he passes through the scenes of his early childhood; for, in no instance does he leave the nursery till, in despite of the wisest guardianship, he has betrayed the existence of partialities and dislikes, which tend to do him injury, and are sure to end in bitterness, unless they are counteracted. The degrees of such aberration may be greatly diversified, and the fondness of parental love may delude itself with imagined instances in which there is no such

thing,—while, in these very instances, the symptoms of them may be quite apparent to the eye of an impartial observer.

Nor can we go far in accounting for these evils, on the principle that their victim is young; for, were they peculiar to youth, we might ascribe them to that hasty shooting forth of passion which belongs to the immaturity of his age, but which the slower growth of reason and experience would, in due time, restrain and rectify. Such a solution, however, is opposed by fact. Reason does grow up, and experience grows up; for the dullest man, who is exempted from absolute idiocy, is placed in circumstances which constrain an advance in both. But the evil is not cured. Propensity retains the control, and either allures the understanding into its measures, or prosecutes inclination in defiance of her dictates. A comparison of the child with the man of years, may indeed show us, that, in the case of the latter, the disease has passed under various modifications, and, of course, has assumed an altered complexion; and from this, it may be loosely inferred to have altogether disappeared. On a closer inspection, however, it will be found, that such an inference is untenable, and that scarcely any thing has been gained by the superadded strength of faculty which elevates the man above the infant, but a corresponding accession to the power of his mental malady. The workings of injurious predilection in the mind of the child, although violent and impetuous, may be combated with some hope of success; because they have neither the firmness of purpose, nor the obstinacy of habit, which, if unresisted, they are afterwards to acquire. But the same

workings in the mind of the man are more deeply seated; and just because they have been longer in the soul, and have the mastery there over a greater power of intellect, is it harder to subdue them. The boy may be found who is ready to part with his title to a rich patrimonial inheritance, for the means of a transient gratification; but the man is as easily found who is prepared to sacrifice, not his patrimony alone, but his health, and character, and conscience along with it, to the idol of his pleasure. In this latter case there is more of intellect than in the former; and, as the thing done is usually effected by a process, and not a single act, a greater degree of plan, and purpose, and practical energy, is required to achieve it: but, for this very reason, there is more of absurdity in the process, and of misery in the result.

Nor let it be thought, that because the instance referred to may be called an extreme one, it is therefore inapplicable to the general principle; for it is nothing more than a fair specimen of that tendency of passion to sophisticate reason, which pervades the whole of human nature. The man whose secular wisdom is the greatest, and who, of course, has made the most of his outward circumstances, may be safely called upon to decide whether, in the few instances in which he has erred, (many in fact, but few in comparison,) the error has not been the same in kind with the one referred to, and differing from it only in the degree of its absurdity; that is, whether in every one of these instances, his experience does not bear him testimony, that "inordinate affection" was, in one shape or other, the germ of the evil. Of course, we are not speaking of the calculations of business,

or science, or politics, although even these come under the sweep of the principle to a greater extent than is always allowed, but of the common use of common things; and in this department it must be conceded, that the verdict of all experience is distinct and uniform. The evil shows itself even in those individuals whose moderation is the most exemplary; and, therefore, it must be held as universal. But why is it so? Nay, why do such pernicious wanderings of desire display themselves at all among the sons of men? By what strange fatality does it come to pass, that while beasts, and birds, and fishes, and insects, in all the multitudes of their tribes and families, are guided so securely to their native enjoyments, man alone has the faculty of perverting that system of provisions which is so finely adapted to his well-being, and of turning it, in defiance of his thirst for happiness, into a ministration of sorrow? Is it true that the understanding of man, after all the dominion in which its Maker enthroned it on the day when he gave it being, and all the eulogy which sages have heaped upon it in the glow of their admiration of its high capabilities, is yet so inferior to instinct, for the great purposes of earthly existence, as to give him reason to regret that he was not created a beast?

It is not true. The darkness of atheism begins to lower over the very conception of the thought, and forewarns us to put it down, as we value our confidence in the theology of nature. The understanding of man, as a guide to sublunary comfort, is just as much superior to that mysterious something which is law to the appetites of animals, as it surpasses that something in its resemblance to him who is God over

all: and to give up with this thought, would be virtually to surrender the great principle which renders a belief in the Deity of any practical benefit to us. On the recurrence of the question, then, Why are the appetites of man, though placed under the guardianship of reason, so precarious guides either to the sources of earthly good, or in the fruition of that enjoyment? we are forced on the conclusion, That man is not now what he has been—that he has fallen from his primitive greatness—that some malignant influence has blasted and enslaved him—and that this same influence, whatsoever it be, or whencesoever it has come, has its seat in the affections of his heart. Thus it is, that looking at him simply as he is in this world, without any reference to his higher relations, we cannot account for the thing which troubles him, without admitting the depravity of his nature: nor can we be acquainted with that depravity, in the mode of its noxious operation, without observing that it uniformly bewilders the capacity of thought, by previously poisoning the spring of feeling.

These considerations, if duly pondered, might be sufficient to redeem the religion of the heart from that disrepute, which is so scornfully cast upon it by men who arrogate a high standing for intelligence and wisdom. They might show such men, that in pure respect for their own understandings, this species of abuse, at least, ought to be left to those drivellers in impiety, who are as ignorant as they are profane. It is a truth which ought to strike them, that a man must be trained to the use of his affections, in order to exercise his reason, or to keep his place in civilized society. Nor can it be easily denied,

that those ancients were men of wisdom, had they not overdone there own maxim, who, with no eye to Christianity, and with little concern about religion of any kind, regarded the discipline of the passions as the grand secret of human education. But it is not in the things of this life merely that man feels "a law in his members warring against the law of his mind," nor is it in this department at all that the licentiousness of appetite inflicts the sorest injury on his ultimate well-being. The same susceptibility of misleading impression which distresses him in the things of this world, rises from what is secular to what is sacred, and, in the worst of its consequences here, we see but an image of its mightier devastations on his prospects for immortality. These things must be conceded by every man who admits the great principles on which Christianity is founded, and with no other man have we any concern at present; but, if they are conceded, they make it manifest that the writer who goes into the science of religious affections, or inculcates a practical attention to them, is not, on this account, a visionary, but proceeding on principles which, in civil life, are held essential to the right formation of human character. In studying such a subject, he is not gazing at the spectres of a sickly brain, but conversant with solemn realities, which are bound up in close and intimate alliance with the eternal destiny of every human soul. That nothing childish, or absurd, or visionary, has ever been written on this subject cannot be asserted; but, if the abuse of a thing be a reason for despising it, then farewell to all that is excellent among the subjects of human thought.

But while the subject is thus sanctioned by the dictates of a sound philosophy, and strongly recommended by its own intrinsic importance, it is impossible to look, with becoming interest, at the present state of the Christian world, without observing the irreligion of the affections in very striking display, and finding reason to deplore it as at once degrading to the Christian profession, and very grievously obstructive of solid religious enjoyment. By no admissible stretch of charity can it be concealed, that the services which Christianity imposes are rendered irksome and insipid, or the minds of its professors made the seat of a frequently recurring uneasiness, while the aspect of professing society is overspread with the symptoms of ghastliness and death through the operation of this very cause. To deny this is impossible, with the Bible in our hands, and its glowing portraitures of primitive godliness looking full upon us, in contrast with living character. But are men in general aware of it? Do they practically hold by it, as a dictate of sound reason, that, while the light of Christianity is to be admitted into the head, its quickening, and warming, and mollifying efficacy is to be admitted into the heart, and suffered to coalesce with all its affections? Does observation warrant the assertion, That all, or even the greater part, who profess to rely on Christianity as the only effectual restorative of man, are attentive to the divine requisition, "My son, give me thine heart?" We are constrained to say it does not. Nay, so great is the deficiency here, that were the most devoted man on earth to be brought to the test of his own reason, and estimated by the extent

to which he makes this surrender, according to reason's dictate, he would be found in woful deficiency. But if this can be said of the *green tree*, what must be the state of the *dry?*

In looking round on the reading public, the eye settles upon one class of men, to whom the culture of religious affections can be a matter of no interest. They are living in a cherished disbelief of the doctrines of Christianity, and although they comply perhaps with its public observances, yet they do so out of mere condescension to the credulity of their weaker brethren, or on grounds which are purely secular, that they may not defeat the influence of what they regard as a very serviceable delusion. For among the more reputable even of sceptics themselves, the impression is pretty general, that something more than the philosopher can furnish, or the moralist enforce, is necessary to quell the insurrectionary spirit of man; while, of all the expedients for this purpose which have ever yet been heard of, Christianity has the first and the fairest claim—a concession, by the way, which, if pressed to its consequences, might turn out to be more candid than considerate; for that which, after an ample experiment, is found to be best suited to the present condition of man, is most likely to have come from the God who made him. But to expostulate with such persons on their want of feeling on religious subjects, is to begin at the wrong end of the subject. They cannot be swayed by the authority of Christianity, because they disown that authority; they cannot be awed by its sublimities, because they have never recognized them: nor can they be softened into tenderness at the thought

of its flowing munificence, because they believe it to have no existence except in the day-dreams of visionary minds. We may tell them, that this exalted offspring of the Deity has resources of her own to sustain her, without the aid of their hypocrisy; that, in the consciousness of intrinsic competency for extending her empire over the human family, she scorns the proffer of their hollow alliance; that she is so pure, and so gentle, and so full of good fruits, as to maintain her own credit and support her own pretensions; and that, if they will not do justice to her credentials, by yielding them the homage of an honest belief, they had better refrain from her, and let her alone: but to claim from them those affections, which spring from her genius, and felicitate the hearts of her subjects, would be to expose her, in all her sacredness, to their impious derision. Nor do we deprecate such an exposure for her sake, but for theirs. She may be maligned, or resisted, or detained in unrighteousness, but she cannot be exterminated; and she is fearful in taking vengeance. The demand is made upon them, first for belief, and then for fervent affection, as the result of that belief; and to neutralize the demand, is as impossible as to break loose from the control of the God of Nature. Christianity is "the kingdom of God," and evinced to be so by signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. The present administration of this kingdom may be converted into "a stone of stumbling or a rock of offence;" and if a man "shall fall on this stone, he shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

It is that portion of the professing community,

then, who give way to the truth of our religion, as well as take part in its outward observances, who are most directly accessible in a discussion of this kind. With them, the advocate of Christianity has at least this advantage, that they are at one with him, or take themselves to be so, as to the reality of the great subject for which he pleads. In this department there are two modifications of conduct, or two extremes, in religious affections, which come very prominently into view. The one is a total destitution of these affections, the other a diversified irregularity, or palpable want of wisdom in the culture and display of them; and although the first of these may be regarded as the most prevalent, as well as in itself the most injurious, yet they are both to be met with in the present state of religious society, and are both operating very injuriously to the diminution of Christian piety.

However strange the thing may appear, it is nevertheless undeniable, that there are many persons, professing Christianity, and prepared, in words, to sound its praises, who have never surrendered their hearts to its influence, nor ever seriously proposed to do so: although placed in circumstances where the tendencies of this influence are presented to their view in inspired description or in living character, they think of it, and talk about it, as does a blind man about the beauties of colour, or cherish, perhaps, so inveterate a dislike of it, that, were the question put to them in the mildest possible manner, or with the most benevolent intentions, What do you know of the religion of the heart? they could scarcely refrain from resenting it as the language of unbearable insult. Still

they do not esteem themselves profane men, nor do they wish to be regarded as such by others. Their conduct is measured by the rules of a correct morality; their presence in the social circle may be a protection from the nuisance of flagrant impiety; or their influence a valuable auxiliary to the dispensers of religious instruction. They make their appearance among Christian worshippers, perhaps, with a commendable regularity; they take part in the prayers or the melodies of the scene, with a most exemplary outward decorum; and they listen, or seem to listen, to whatever is convincing or instructive, or admonitory or consoling, in a diversified Christian ministration, while they pass through the whole with as much apathy, as if mere good-breeding were the sum total of social religion.

It is admitted, indeed, that the man who is thus precise in his devotion to the ceremony of religion, must come to be interested in it, either pleasurably or otherwise. The very growth of habit, as superinduced by practice, will contribute something to this; while his partialities for a particular ministration, or his aversion to it, with the display of talent or imbecility, of taste or vulgarity, of eloquence or its opposite, of decided churchmanship or thorough-going dissenterism,* which characterize it, may stimulate the emotions, or call forth the expression of approbation or dislike. These emotions, however, are not to be confounded with religious affections. A man is not religious because he admires what is excellent, or re-

* These terms, it will be seen, are restricted to the mere sectarianism, which may render a man a bigoted devotee, and, of course, a discredit to either the church or the chapel.

probates what is bad, in the modes or appendages of Christian worship. The two things are as entirely distinct, as the symmetry of a human body and a piece of attire by which it is adorned or disfigured. Feelings excited in this way, although tending, by alliance, to excite or repress the spirit of devotion, are, in themselves, absolute neutralities, which may rise into the highest delight without being sublimated by the slightest tinge of Christian piety, or sink into the deepest disgust without being impious, provided that, in both cases, they be sustained by a proper estimate of their exciting cause. Such a confusion of ideas is, nevertheless, very prevalent; and such appendages as have been specified, are very frequently taken up as the theme of applause or reprehension, just as if this were religion: while the *spiritualities* of the subject, with the topics for devout reflection and hallowed conference, which are suggested by its every service, are left, like the robes of the officiating priesthood, within the precincts of a place of worship, nor ever permitted to mingle themselves in any form whatever with the intercourse of social or domestic life.

It is to this state of mind that we are to trace that ridiculous medley of avocation to which many individuals, and many families, are regularly given upon the first day of the week, where attendance at church, and the more retired species of festivity and amusement, and gossippers on the tradesmanship of preachers, and the reading of a newspaper, and the perishing tattle of the day, and the yawn of absolute ennui, are blended together in one accordant mass of absurdity and irreligion, while every thing which properly belongs to that day is parried off from the heart, as if

pregnant with contagion. A single impulse of celestial feeling would put to flight this whirl of frivolities, or convince the man who gives way to it, that he is under the frown of the God of heaven. But if the first day of the week be thus dissipated into vanity—if the solemnities of that selected season, which God has ordained to be kept holy, can neither awe the soul into thoughtfulness, nor dissolve it into scriptural contrition, nor attune it to the melody of spiritual joy, it would be vain to look for a better state of mind at any other season. In such a case as this, the every-day forms of domestic religion, which, when animated by its spirit, are so finely fitted to sweeten and consolidate the relations of families, with the sublimating tendencies of the pieties of the closet, must be altogether unknown. Or if a few shreds of them make their appearance, they are so dry, and meagre, and ill sustained, as only to increase the moral desolation. The man who has no religion on the Sabbath, although frequenting the scene of its appointed ministration, must of necessity have as little on every other day: for if the influence of that ministration could not warm his soul into adoration, while in the act of appealing to his conscience, or as yet fresh in his recollection, how can it be expected to do so after its impression is weakened by the intervention of secular pursuits. From the use, then, to which a man is in the habit of putting the Christian Sabbath, we may safely estimate the tenor of his life. If, on that day, he give no scope to the exercise of those affections which are specifically religious, it may be confidently affirmed, that a still deeper desecration will sit down upon his spirits amidst the business of ordinary life.

It were indeed a happy relief from this conclusion, could it be said with truth, that these strictures are hypothetical, and have little specific bearing on existing circumstances: but the fact, that the evil exists in a multitude of instances, and is held compatible with a profession of Christianity, while the description given of it is short of the reality, is too notorious to be denied. An individual may indeed be situated in the midst of a pious sequestered circle, who are compact and happy in each other, and see little of the great world, but what is cheering and auspicious; and in this case, he may take it for granted, that what he does not know of the religion of his times, is much of a piece with what he knows. But let him look at the evolutions of religious character as these display themselves on a large scale, and he will find a deficiency of the very kind referred to, so marked, and prevalent, and hopelessly obstinate, as to fill him with dismal forebodings. Nor will it be the least of his regrets to discover, that in cases not a few, this worst of moral diseases has the firmest hold of its victim, and is exerting its sullen and stupifying influence most successfully, where it is least to be expected. For not only is it true, that hearts which are susceptible of the warmest friendships, and endowed with the finest of natural sensibilities, are yet cold as the icy ocean to every thing feelingly Christian; but too often does it happen, that these are the very hearts which are least of all accessible to any attempt to reclaim them. As if conscious that Christianity has a right to their affections, and power to take them captive, they are jealous of all its approaches, and will yield themselves up to any

discussion but that which involves the spirit of its requirements.

It is a very possible thing, that persons of this description may be suffering much uneasiness amidst the decencies of their nominal piety. They may be haunted by a strong suspicion, that a name to live is, after all, the amount of their attainment. They may even retain a habitual consciousness, which is occasionally fired into remorse, that in the sight of God they are deceivers; and, prompted by this consideration, they may form purposes, and fix dates for a thorough renovation of their mental habits, while these formations and fixtures, having no root in the principle of reformation, but proceeding from the restlessness of mere pain, are dishonoured and forgotten as the excitement subsides. Such disquietudes, it is true, are the ordinary presages of reformation; and the man who is under them is hopefully interesting, especially when their power and frequency are on the increase. But so long as the practice continues the same—so long as the risings of conscience, instead of changing the current of feeling, or renewing the springs of action, are combated and borne down by the strength of opposing inclination—just so long are they to be regarded, not as the symptoms of incipient recovery, but as the convulsive indications of increasing disease. They may accumulate the miseries of the man; they may teach him by experience, that he is putting "bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter;" but they furnish him with nothing whatever, which can place him on a better footing for meeting the claims of Christian duty, or appearing before the Judge of all the earth.

The darkest symptom of the case, however, is that in which there is no disquietude, but a uniform and invincible contentedness, undisturbed by the slightest suspicion of any serious defalcation. The man has taken up his profession at the impulse of imitative feeling, or, it may be, from a good natural disposition to support the religion of his country. He admits the truth of revelation, not because it is true, but because his kindred believe it, and he is not prepared to say it is false. He has no stated controversy to plead with its doctrines, or gratuities, or institutions, because he never saw them in any other light than that of cold, and distant, and mystified abstractions, whose agreement or disagreement with his ruling propensities he has never thought of ascertaining. In short, he holds himself a subject of Christianity, associated with its friends, sharing in its privileges, and possessing an undoubted claim to its coming felicities; although he could have said the same thing, and that too for the same reasons, of the visions of Mahomed, or the rites of Juggernaut, had he been born in Turkey or in Hindostan. In this view of the matter, dry, and frigid, and cheerless though it be, he maintains a deathlike acquiescence; and while, in the things of this life, he is subject to like passions with other men, partaking with them in the hopes, and fears, and joys, and sorrows of our common humanity, yet on this one point he exhibits a flat and monotonous expectation, which knows no vicissitude and dreads no repulse, but seems alike incapable of elevation or depression. Or if there be some occasional variation, as in the most equable temperament there necessarily must, it is so slight

and evanescent, as never to show itself beyond the precincts of the inner man.

There is no reasoning required to show, that this way of being a Christian, even in the most favourable of its aspects, is a deep and perilous infatuation. Not only is there ground to *fear* that the heart which is thus situated is shut out from the grace of God, but the *conviction* that it is, is forced upon us without the possibility of resistance. What is Christianity? Is it not a system which undeniably can do nothing for man, without working its way into his affections, and making its own of his moral sensibilities? Does not its Author found on it as a first principle, that before men can find in it that substantial satisfaction which it is fitted to impart, the foul affections which characterize him in his ungodliness must be mortified, and new affections, of a pure and celestial order, created in their stead? Although it be unaccountably forgotten, it is nevertheless clear as the light of day, that the religion of the Bible is devised, and revealed, and pressed upon man, under the notion of a remedy; and in calling upon him to embrace it, he is uniformly addressed as the victim of a moral disorder. But this disorder is in the heart: nor has it merely reached the heart in its progressive invasion of the man, it has commenced there. The first blight of its deadly influence was felt at the hearts of the parents of men; it is established in the affections of the heart, as the seat of its wasteful dominion; and it is only in proportion as it is dislodged from the heart, that the symptoms of convalescence can make their appearance in the intellect, or the will, or the conduct of the man.

But as Christianity is thus made for the heart of man, and fitted to purify its every emotion, so it is by the respondings of the heart to its compassionate appeals, that he commences or continues his participation of its restoring efficacy. It is on this account, that the reception of its benefits is described in Scripture, not as an exercise of cold intellection, but as the gratification of eager desire. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you." Unless your belief in the great Christian Sacrifice be to you a matter of positive fruition, you cannot but be dead; because you are destitute of that instinctive relish for spiritual nourishment which indicates the existence of spiritual life. To expatiate here, however, would be endless. This high-toned religion is all over a religion of love. Whether we look at it in its origin, or its doctrines, or its spirit, or its discipline, or its progress, or its consummation, we see it to be pervaded, and illumined, and encompassed by the glory of divine munificence. If it were not a religion of love, it would be lost upon human nature; for man, as the creature of God, is endowed with affections which, whether he will or not, and whether he be holy or unholy, are the medium of his happiness or misery. They are essential parts of his constitution, ordained to stimulate his powers of action, and, without them, his thoughts and his recollections, and, of course, his capacities of pain or pleasure, would languish in eternal torpor. But we may say, it is more than a religion of love; at least, it is love modified and mixed up into an exact accordance with the present condition of man. This, indeed, is the character of every dispensation which comes

from God to his rational offspring. When he created our world, and wrapt it in respirable air, and gilded it with light and colour, and covered it with freshness and verdure, and overspread its teeming bosom with all the diversities of fruit and fragrance, and placed it under the dominion of man, and exhibited the whole as a mirror for reflecting the wonders of his Godhead, he showed himself, by symbols the most expressive, to be the fountain of exuberant goodness; adapting that goodness, in wisdom the most exquisite, to the situation of holy human intelligences. And to enjoy him, even in this state of things, it was indispensable that the innocent creature who drank from the rivers of his pleasures, should exercise the purest religious affections. But when he created Christianity he did more than this. He formed the new dispensation to the new state of things. By a fresh development of wisdom, he carried his love beyond the precincts of innocence, and sent it forth on a great pacific embassy into the dark regions of depravity, proclaiming to the creatures of rebellion and wretchedness, who had lost the use of his material creation, and converted its stores into the resources of crime, "forgiveness with him that he may be venerated, and plenteous redemption that he may be sought unto."

If these things are so, (and who that has but glanced on his Bible can set them aside?) they teach us most forcibly, that to propose to be religious, without the exercise of the affections, is to meditate a wild excursion into the regions of impossibility, to attempt an impotent and daring infraction at once on the specific bearings of Christianity, and on the con-

stitution of the human mind. We may have to do with many trivial things, and we may give them their due in a state of comparative neutrality of mind: but duty to God, and sin against him, are great things and righteous; or wicked, pious, or impious we cannot be, without a strong excitement of human feeling. The reason is, that thought, and feeling, and conduct, are inseparably conjoined in such minds as ours; and where the heart is not given, the man is not given. Make of it then what we may, it remains a truth, that the religion which is from above was made for hearts—for human hearts—for human hearts depraved by sin,—it is kind, and gentle, and suasive, and social, that it may interest such hearts; and so far as it is excluded from the heart, it can have no living subsistence among the children of men. A person may honour it with whatever else he pleases; he may give his body to its ceremonies, or his mind to its disquisitions, or his money to its promulgation, or his influence to the enforcement of its social moralities; but unless these givings be sustained and consecrated by the higher and holier devotion of the heart, they are inanities in the sight of God.

If it be asked, 'Why labour to make out a point which is self-evident, and which no man in his senses will venture to deny?' the apology is, that although the point itself be evident, yet the moral principle involved in it is wofully obscured; and we know of no fitter means competent to man, for restoring it to its place, as a stimulant of action, than a display of its force and solidity, or an honest disclosure of the consequences in which the man is involved who continues to disregard it. The only way in which

a man can have access to the conscience of his fellow-man, is by appealing to his understanding, from the principles of the Bible; and although the moral of these principles be always a plain point, yet it furnishes material for that very species of discussion and persuasion which the Spirit of God employs for accomplishing his merciful purpose. Now, it is strange indeed that religion, with its collateral interests, is almost the only thing within the whole range of voluntary avocation, from which many thousands of baptized men withhold the exercise of their affections; and if they found a man displaying the same apathy in his secular pursuits which they display in this department, they would be tempted to question the sanity of his mind. What, for instance, would be thought of the man who, while he had joined himself to the admirers of the drama, and continued to occupy a seat within the walls of the theatre with the utmost steadiness and regularity, had no relish whatever for dramatic representation? and, while others around him were gathering up delight from the burst of eloquence, or the flash of wit, or the play of humour, which the incidents of the piece, or the skill of the performers was successively sending forth upon them; while, in short, they were wafted along by the current of the sentiment, and giving way to the alternations of joy or of terror, of tenderness or of sensuality, which the spirit of the amusement was fitted to inspire, he was as completely isolated from the whole as if he had been blind, and deaf, and dumb. Such a person would unquestionably be marked as a strange anomaly in his department, and it might puzzle ingenuity to ascertain what could

possibly induce him to be there at all.—The same thing might be said of the initiated sportsman. He is not addicted to the toils, or fearless of the hazards of the field, as a matter of mere ceremony. He gives his heart to it, as, to him at least, the medium of high delight. Every incident of the scene gives a new impulse to his soul, and catching the inspiration of the howling quadrupeds which scour the plain before him, he shares in their brutal happiness, or suffers along with them in their disappointment.—So it is also with the miser, or the sensualist, or, to rise to names of another order, the man of taste and science, in letters and philosophy. It is counted on, as a matter of course, that each is actuated by the spirit of his pursuit, or formed into its likeness with more or less entireness, according to the place which it holds in the affections of his heart; and where this inspiration fails, he is disowned by the brotherhood on which he is thus obtruded, as a hated obstruction to the flow of their enjoyment. This is the way of the world; but why should it be otherwise in reference to Christianity? Shall men pour out the whole fervour of their souls on science, or wealth, or vulgar amusement, while the things which involve eternity, with all its woes or felicities, are treated with callous neglect? Men are accustomed to pervert themselves thus, and the evil is so common, it has ceased to be wondered at; but were they to look at things as they really are, the enormity of their conduct, as an offence against reason, to carry the matter no higher, would fill them with alarm.

It is no vindication of the apathy complained of to say, 'I cannot do otherwise. My friends, and

my habits, and my most intimate associations, are all in league with it, and present a barrier in the way of a change, which is altogether impassable.' Reasonings of this kind are not only unmanly, because absurd; but to give way to them, is to make choice of death rather than life, and of cursing rather than blessing, and to do so by a decision which is so much the more desperate, that it is cool and deliberate. Other men have been as deeply immured as you in the friendships, and habits, and associations of irreligion, and yet have either succeeded in transforming them into a purer and better commodity, or have cast them off as insufferable incumbrances to all rational and dignified activity. Where, then, is the proof, that there is a mysterious peculiarity attaching itself to your destiny, and binding you down, as in chains of adamant, to a course of conduct which you know to be unreasonable, and feel to be ruinous? The bondage of which you speak is moral, not physical, not created by your Maker, but contracted by yourself; not forced upon you by the pressure of circumstances, but wrapped around you by your own hands. Its real name is disinclination, not disability. You are just as you wish to be, estranged from religious affections; because, all things considered, you judge it best to be so. Come fairly to the point and you cannot but see it, that the same portion of mental energy which you daily put forth in offending the God who made you, and resisting the spirit of his service, is quite sufficient for the exercise of loving him. The power to dishonour the God of heaven throughout the whole created universe, is co-extensive with the power to adore him;

and wherever we see a creature who is able to be impious, there we see one who could be pious were he so inclined. Still it is true, that you cannot do otherwise: the only reason of the truth, however, is, that you will not do otherwise; and this brings the whole responsibility in fearful accumulation on your own head. But if the decision to continue as you are, be at war with your better judgment—if, in despite of its preponderance, you feel conscious of a struggling wish that your heart were emancipated; then this very wish, cold, and languid, and overborne though it be, is the element out of which there may come forth a renovated order of thought and volition. But guard it with incessant vigilance, carry it to the great Author of Christianity, that he may transform, and invigorate, and warm it into desire by the Spirit of his grace; for you will find with him an influence rich, and free, and most gratuitous, possessing an efficacy which is more than sufficient to charm your bondage all away: "To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

Nor is it a better vindication to say, 'My Christianity is just like that of others around me, who think, and feel, and act as I do; and if I am in arrears to the claims of duty, I am but on a footing with multitudes who are awaiting the final decision in the very same predicament.' This may be true, for "wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat;" but the native inference from it is, that your situation is so much the more perilous. The question is, Are these persons right, or are they wrong? Is their practice supported by sound, and enlightened, and well-

defined religious principles? or is it the spurious offspring of depravity and delusion, like your own? If the former, your reference to them is pertinent, and you are warranted to feel confirmed by the suffrage of their example; but if the latter, it is preposterous, and ministers nothing to you but an amplified illustration of your danger and infatuation. He who is under a bodily malady does not fear it the less for being told it is epidemic, and preying even unto death on the whole neighbourhood in which he resides. So far is he from this, that his knowledge of these things, conjoined with his own experience of its virulence, invests it with an additional horror in the eye of his imagination, and gives a tenfold intensity to his desire for relief. The application is obvious, and the conclusion is irresistible, that the man who in this way pleads precedent, to palliate his irreligion, is wilfully disguising the whole subject, and is held fast in the enchantment which lures to destruction.

Nor yet is it a vindication to plead disgust at the imprudences which may accompany religious affections among those who are most distinguished by them. It is a very possible thing, that imprudences alleged in this way are greatly magnified, if not created, by the cherished dislike of the man whom they offend; and of course, that sounder views of the subject, and a healthier course of conduct, would displace them from their present prominence as occasions of offence. But admitting their existence to an extent which is highly blameable, the point to be ascertained is, In what do they originate? Are they inseparably connected with religious affections, or do

they proceed from incapacity, or bad training, on the part of the persons in whom they appear? To charge them on Christianity is to speak the language of infidelity, and to disregard the evidence of facts, which have shown, in instances unnumbered, that the minds which are most habitually under its influence are the most thoroughly rational. But if in candour they are to be ascribed, not to the system but to the man who misguides it, then why connect them with Christianity at all? or why regard its holy exercises as either the better or the worse for the prevalence of such things? Men do not depreciate what is intrinsically excellent, because it is often abused; and if they did, they would soon cease to find excellence beneath the sun. Nor can they involve it in any way with the follies, or even crimes, of which the imbecility or perversity of others may make it the occasion, without committing a flagrant outrage on the standing laws of human thought. A professor of religion may be something of a visionary, who frequently provokes the derision even of the well-disposed; or he may be a brain-sick enthusiast, soaring in the altitudes of imagined felicity, or shivering under the horrors of ideal despair. The theme of his rhapsody, in the one case, may be the munificence of the Bible; or in the other, the wrath which it reveals from heaven against all ungodliness of men: but to confound these things with rational piety, is to err as widely on the one extreme as he does on the other. It is matter of ingenuous regret, that so much as an occasion of offence should originate in this quarter, although, in the present state of human nature, it is always to be expected; and as the spirit

of Christianity arises to its native fervour, we are likely to see more of it; for were the impulse which it gives to the affections more deeply and generally felt, the instances of constitutional defect, among the subjects of its operation, would of course be multiplied. But it is still more deeply to be regretted, that the principles of candour and sound discrimination should be so far departed from, as to foster the growth of irreligion, by blending such excrescences with the genuine fruits of vital godliness. If we look, however, at the miserable material with which such a pretext is usually got up, the circumstances in which it is resorted to, and the affected levity or wrathful obstinacy with which it is retained, there is reason to suspect, that the objector himself is aware of its futility, and that, after all, it is not so much his head as his heart which is in fault.

The imprudences chargeable on religious affections, in a few of their diversified lines of operation, were to be noticed in the second part of this Essay; but the space already occupied restricts us to a mere outline of what was at first intended. It is very conceivable that a heart may be really Christian, while the motions of spiritual life are so languid as to approximate very nearly to entire destitution; and, in this case, the person may find a caveat in what is stated above. But it cannot be denied, that even where these motions would seem to be vigorous, there is frequently error on the other extreme. In almost every age, and in ours among the rest, a species of affection has broke in upon the sanctities of religion, which, did it really belong to the subject, would tend

infallibly to involve it in suspicion—an affection which shows itself in all the fervour, and claims for itself all the sacredness of zeal for the Lord of Hosts; which is bustling and impetuous in its spirit, disgustingly ostentatious in the display of its activities, and reckless of all delicacy, in assaulting every thing which is in any way obstructive of its fiery career. A zealot of this kind usually takes his cast from the spirit of the age in which he lives, or the religious party to which he belongs, and carries to a mischievous excess what is either in itself good, or would be comparatively harmless, if tempered with moderation. In one man, this spirit may be set on fire by a favourite nostrum, struck out, as he supposes, from the word of God, or borrowed, it may be, from some master-spirit which he has chosen to give law to his understanding. In this nostrum, however childish or fanciful, he is absorbed. It is to him the central point of all religious thought or feeling. For its sake every thing else is forgotten, or only noticed to be strained into a subserviency to it; and in the glow of his enthusiasm, he employs it as a test by which to estimate the understandings, and try the hearts, if not to settle the future destinies, of all to whom he has access. In another man, it assumes a sectarian aspect, magnifying the excellencies, and palliating the defects, either of the church or the chapel, in some one or other of their modifications, beyond all reasonable bounds. In another, it raises the outcry of error and immorality, surrounding itself with images of apostacy, so hideous and portentous, as to lead the unwary to suppose, that the expiring remains of Christian piety, with all that is righteous

and holy, are just about to depart from the earth, while the points on which he fixes as evidence of this, may be the most equivocal, or least alarming of all the signs of the times. In another, it sounds the trumpet of liberality, proclaiming an era of jubilant felicity, if men would but forget to investigate, and learn to acquiesce; and fretting itself beyond all endurance, at the bigotry of those recusants, who are not prepared to decry all distinctions, and hide them out of view, in the placid ocean of universal good-will.

Similar to this in point of injurious effect, although widely different in complexion, is that sickly frame of spirit, which is all sensibility, either painful or pleasurable, and can appreciate nothing in Christianity, however important or seasonable, unless it minister in one shape or other to the fitful and frivolous musings of a religious sentimentalism. The mind which is afflicted with this disorder has usually a few topics, every one of which is imbued with feeling, although, perhaps, but remotely connected with what is solid or edifying; and to these topics it is wedded by something like the tenacity of a maniac to his reverie, while so great is its predilection for its own isolated habits, that it shrinks from every thing which seems to oppose them, and can scarcely be conversed with by any other mind which is not of precisely its own contexture. The tendency of such freakishness is to narrow religion into a circle of retired and mopping tenderness: and, instead of being actuated by that charity which is extensively operative, because enlightened, and liberal, and well-established, it invests itself with a mantle of jealousy, through the foldings of which it looks shy upon every thing which does

not accord with its preconceptions. Now, there is no Christianity in either the one or the other of these aberrations; nor can her aspect be seen through so troubled a medium, except in a state of the most unseemly distortion. She may have a place in a mind of this description, for her graces will exist where they are but scantily nourished, and very defectively displayed, but for the development of their true excellence—for the efficient exhibition of their attractive and assimilating influence, there must be a strength of principle and an enlargement of thought, and a chastened disposition to coalesce or accommodate, from which such a spirit is grievously estranged. The spirit of Christianity, it ought to be considered, is associating as well as distinctive. It redeems the soul from littleness, as well as separates it from this world. It takes effect upon the human mind in all the possible diversity of its constitutional peculiarities, from the softest and most retiring, to the hardiest and most heroic; and acting on this diversity without destroying it, it brings its subjects together, and fits up an instrument of complex mechanism, and exquisite power, for sounding the praises of the Most High. The charm of this moral melody, however, like that of all other melody, is harmony, not unison. It arises not from the exact sameness of texture and tension, in every particular cord of the instrument, but from that nice adaptation of the one to the other, by which the full and free vibration of each, after its own manner, is made to contribute its part to heighten the general effect. But, in opposition to this, the tendency of mind on which we are remarking is a dull and deadening unison, which can give forth no

melody, because it admits of no diversity—a state of things which is incompatible both with the spirit of Christianity, and with that wonderful power of accommodation which God has given to the human mind; while it cannot fail to make the new creature, if a new creature he be, a peevish and sickly nursling, when he ought to have been healthful and athletic. The liberalizing of religious affections, no doubt, has its limits, beyond which it is sinful, and may be very pernicious; but these limits are fixed by the same authority which demands it, and the wisdom to find them out is imparted by the same grace which inspires it. To the obvious dereliction of principle, or piety, or pure scriptural morality, the Christian is to give no tolerance; and with these things his religion requires from him no forbearance. But even in these cases, he is to be actuated not by the obstinacy of a bigot, or the caprice of a recluse, but by a firmness which is intelligent, and considerate, and thoroughly Christianized.

It is most frequently, perhaps, although not exclusively, among the second of these two classes of professors, that we hear of those sudden and vivid suggestions from the word of God, which, in the musings of their retirement, have impressed their minds, assuring them of their interest in his favour, or affording them instant relief in cases of peculiar mental affliction. Matters of this kind, we are aware, ought to be touched with a gentle hand. The instances are not few in which it is hard to distinguish between reality and illusion; and remembering who hath said, "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell

whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit,"—remembering, also, that those impressions which issue in conversion, or revive the soul of a drooping Christian, are most frequently made, especially upon minds which are weak and ignorant, not by a process of deductive thought, but in the very "words which the Holy Ghost teacheth," while the circumstances in which they operate to gracious ends, may be very extraordinary, it becomes us to speak with the greatest caution. But without any disparagement of these solemn considerations, nay, for the sake of defending them from the abuse and obloquy to which they are too often exposed, we are warranted in affirming, that when a passage of Scripture is obviously perverted, in order to render it applicable; or, when the mood of mind in which it occurs is trifling or frivolous; or, when the purpose to which it is applied is unwarrantable, or ought to be prosecuted by other means; or, when the soul nestles in it as in a place of shelter, without being impelled to Christian industry; or, when the delight which it inspires is felt to be compatible with the love of sin, or yields a positive inducement to the continuance of its pleasure; or, when it is secretly exulted in as a rare, if not a miraculous token of the divine regard, although there be nothing singular in the circumstances of the individual, and thus ministers to pride and presumption,—when such things as these are the concomitants or results of sudden suggestions from the word of God, they are not to be associated with the work of the Spirit in the soul of man.

The man, it is true, whose religious enjoyment

is both genuine in kind, and exalted in degree, may very speedily relapse into sin, yea, into aggravated sin, which brings sorrow upon himself, and scandal upon his sacred profession; but although this may come after such enjoyment, it can never come out of it; for the gifts of God in Jesus Christ are moral attractions, not repellencies. Their native tendency is to draw the soul upwards to a higher elevation on the scale of holiness, and those impressions which have not this tendency, however vivid, or felicitous, or striking in the mode of their production, although they have come from the words of Scripture, fairly quoted, and correctly interpreted, are, after all, to be disregarded. Much more are they to be disregarded, when they proceed from a manifest abuse of Scripture; for it would be impious to suppose, that when the Spirit of God speaks to man through the medium of revelation, he can do so in any other way than by using his own words, in his own meaning. He cannot pervert the oracle which he has dictated, nor can a perversion of it on the part of man, however plausible or well-intentioned, be sanctioned by his influence. In the ordinary course of his gracious operation, he makes a progressive use of the gospel of his grace, and in dealing with man by means of it, he treats him as a reasonable being, causing him to feel the power of the truth, not by entrancing him in visions and ecstacies, but by bringing him to the sober and regulated use of his understanding and his heart. Nor has any man, whatever be his standing in the church, or in the estimate of the Christian brotherhood, a right to suppose, that the secret of a happy destiny is revealed to him, except in so

far as the moral elements of such a destiny in holiness, and righteousness, and love, are realized within him. We are far from insinuating, that those floods of joy which are sometimes poured upon the hearts of the godly, and fill them with a momentary rapture, are altogether imaginary, or furnish *no* evidence that the man whom they visit is born of the Spirit. To speak thus would be to offend, and most justly to offend, the generation of the faithful, as well as to utter impiety against the God of heaven; for in these visitations, rare and intermitting though they be, we see the most signal foretastes of celestial felicity, which can possibly be arrived at beneath the sun. In themselves, however, they are no evidence. Apart from the principle of abiding piety, and steadily progressive holiness, of which, when genuine, they are at once the produce and the index, the man who pretends to them is greatly to be suspected; and yet it too often happens, that a fondness to talk about religious ecstacies, or an eagerness to cherish the memory of them, or a restless impatience of their absence, or a proneness to convert them into tests of character, takes hold of the mind of many a professor, and occupies his daily thoughts at the expense of turning him away from those immediate exercises which lead, circuitously it may be, but securely, to the enjoyment of solid delight, in all its purity and permanence. It ought not to be forgotten, that the Christian must come near to his God, not by a transient impulse of feeling, but by the regular growth of his renovated character, in order to detain upon his spirit the tranquillity, or to fill it with the satisfaction which his religion is fitted to impart; and to

seek to procure these in any other way, is to pass from the region of sober thought into that of gross enthusiasm, and thus to involve the whole exercsie in confusion and perplexity. There may be seasons of uncommon enjoyment, especially with the youthful and zealous, where the process of sanctification is but in its commencement; and when these are granted, let them be cherished with all humility and gratitude; but let them never be looked upon as the only sure signs of true religion, nor ever put in the place of the clearer and steadier indications of what a man really is in the sight of God.

On a review of these remarks, it seems necessary to say, that they are by no means intended to interfere with the diversities of *constitutional* temperament, which distinguish men from each other. The man who is cool in his natural temperament, will also be cool in his Christianity; and the man who is distinguished for sensibility, or sprightliness, or ardour, will usually exhibit these elements of character in a Christianized form, during all the stages of his preparation for heaven. Indeed, he must do so; for Christianity, so far as we know, is not commissioned to produce any change upon the sensibilities of our nature, beyond what is necessary to counteract the effects of sin. Nor is it desirable that the case should be otherwise; for were the diversities referred to entirely abolished, the many utilities of which they are every day productive, behooved to disappear along with them. There is an obvious charm in such diversities; and the wish to see them abolished, may contemplate more than is likely to be arrived at, even in a state of perfection; for there seems no extrava-

gance in supposing, that those constitutional peculiarities, whether of intellect or affection, which are now so much vitiated and overdriven in the servitude of sin, may yet contribute very powerfully to enrich and enliven the fellowship of the saints, and to accentuate the song of their combined adoration, after sin is put away, and the redemption of the whole man carried up to its consummation. But, allowing to them, in the present state, all reasonable latitude, it must still be contended, that as every man has affections, the exercise of which he owes to God in the solemnities of religion; and as these affections, whatever be their diversity, are so much himself, that the withholding of them is equivalent to the withholding of himself from God; so the sin of thus withholding them, or of perversity in the management of them, either by shortcoming or excess, is not palliated by this concession, but still rests upon his head. The great matter for consideration is, that to have no heart at all for religion, or to have a heart which involves its sacred principles in the wildest or silliest absurdity, is not a thing to which any man is bound down by the law of his creation, but a thing to which he has bound himself down by "the law of sin and death which is in his members;" and for the existence of it, therefore, as a delinquency chargeable on him, no created ingenuity can furnish a pleadable apology.

A portraiture of the Works of President Edwards, is happily not called for on the present occasion, and ought never to be attempted by ordinary minds. Their place is assigned to them by the con-

current suffrage of all competent judges; and to say, that in power of metaphysical thinking, scarcely less accurate than it is profound; digested into practical uses, with amazing perspicuity; overawed by a high veneration for the authority of revealed truth; adorned by a candour in controversy, the most dignified and manly; and imbued with a piety which, for vigour, elevation, and fervour, befitted the mind from which they came;—to say, that in these things they are equalled by few, and excelled by none, is not to give a decision, but feebly to reiterate the sentence which has already been often pronounced, and to which the pious and penetrating in subsequent ages, as they rise into eminence in the science of theology, are successively appending their confirmation.

The fact, that this Treatise was written by Edwards, is sufficient to commend it to those who are acquainted with his philosophical acumen, as displayed in his other works; and if the subject do not offend them, they are likely to grant it an eager perusal. It is the subject itself, however, as dissected by the hand of this great moral anatomist, on which the interest of the reader should be chiefly concentrated: and if the things already glanced at, be indeed operating very perniciously each in its own way; nay, if the whole combined, taken in connection with similar deformities, which could easily be specified, makes out a very serious charge against the present generation of Christian professors, we do not know of another treatise within the whole range of practical theology, which is better fitted to do it away than the one before us. Some of the evils hinted

at are directly encountered in the course of its pages; and with respect to others, which are not so formally brought into view, there are principles discussed with peculiar clearness and force of conviction, which are well calculated to destroy their influence, and put an end to their flimsiness and folly. The work, in fact, may be regarded as disclosing what we may call the philosophy of religious affections; demonstrating the reality of Christian experience from the principles of the Bible, combined with established facts in the history of man; vindicating its phenomena from the charge of enthusiasm, and showing their most entire accordance with the soundest dictates of moral science: thus teaching the Christian to think with vigour and accuracy, and inspiring him with the animating consciousness, in despite of the quibbles of infidelity, that in yielding up his heart to the sorrows and joys, the solicitudes and solacements of a religious life, he is but complying with the responsibilities of his nature, as placed under a dispensation of the grace of God. This is achieved in a style so masterly, that had the volume no other use, it might be regarded, on this ground alone, as of the highest importance; for the practice of exhibiting the philosophy of our nature, and the culture of revealed religion, as so much at variance, that the man who embraces the one is bound in consistency to abandon the other, has done incalculable injury, both to revelation itself, as a system of saving belief, and to a most interesting class of jealous inquirers, to whom it is offered for salvation. It is painful to think, that a practice so irrational has been too often countenanced by the friends of religion, as well as exemplified by

its foes. But of all men on earth, the Christian is the last who ought to look shy on the philosophy of morals; for in proportion as its genuine dictates are sought out, and defined, and multiplied, will they be found, not merely to tally with Christianity, but powerfully to support its essential principles, to the overthrow of infidelity, whether practical or speculative, and the establishment of "the kingdom of heaven" on the ruins of its hollow pretences. This department of science, no doubt, has been wofully mismanaged, and thus made to war against Christianity, although its just and natural ally; but for that very reason, instead of being disowned, it ought to be cherished and rescued: for men are born to be moral philosophers; we find that they are so in all ranks or conditions of society, whether barbarous or civilized, and if they are not taught to consecrate the subject to the interests of true religion, they will infallibly abuse it.

A more immediate tendency of this volume, is not merely to establish the Christian in the doctrines of his belief, but to teach him the sacred art of digesting doctrine into the nourishment of piety. With great force of practical argument, and instructive variety of illustration, does the Author call upon his reader to watch over the state of his heart, to scrutinize his religious attainments, to guard against deception in so momentous a concern, and to preserve the characteristics of decided scriptural piety habitually before his mind. These are things which give to the volume a standing importance at all times, and in all circumstances; but there are considerations, which render the re-appearance of it in our

times peculiarly seasonable. Whatever may be said of our liberality, or bustling public spirit, or whatever be the amount of sound and vital principle which is giving stimulus to our zeal, it cannot be concealed, that to a great extent we are a careless generation, engrossed with externals, and but little accustomed to look into our hearts. In the very aspect which the Christian world has now assumed, there is something to be dreaded, as well as something to be extolled. We are laudably active in doing good, on the arena of public benevolence; but just because we are so, is there danger of mistaking the pleasures of social effort for the emotions of Christian love; and to such a state of things there is something, nay, there is very much, in this searching performance, which is fitted to be a seasonable antidote. The man who is constrained to be much in society, and has but little leisure for talking with his heart, will find it an excellent preservative from the snares of his situation. Besides, there are symptoms that religion is reviving among the children of our people. "The day-spring from on high" is visiting us afresh, in several places of the land. If these appearances increase, as we trust in God they will, we may reckon on it, that now, as formerly, they will be mingled in their progress with errors and excesses, which disturb the operation of gracious principle, and prove a cause of sorrow to every ingenuous Christian heart. But this very Treatise was written at a season of great religious excitement, which was accompanied with many excesses in the Author's native country. It was the production of such a season on the scene of his pastoral labours in a far distant region,—it was

blessed there, at that time, as the means of extensive usefulness,—and to a similar state of things among us, should it come forth, it will be found to be equally applicable.

No Christian on earth, however, be his talents or piety what they may, is always exempted from mistakes: and although the penetration and accuracy, which so strikingly characterized the mind of Edwards, render it generally unsafe to controvert his statements, while the fact that he is no longer with us to vindicate himself, demands for his writings a charitable construction; yet there is one of his positions in the work before us, which cannot remain unnoticed, without leaving a stumbling-block in the way of many a sincere inquirer.—His second proposition under the third division of the work, is stated as follows: "The first objective ground of gracious affections, is the transcendently excellent and amiable nature of divine things, as they are in themselves, and not any conceived relation which they bear to self or self-interest." The same sentiment, in substance, is brought into view in the third proposition of the same series. Now it is not denied, that religious affections do arise sooner or later from the things here stated; although we cannot help doubting, whether the *first emotions* of genuine piety in the heart of any incipient convert, were ever such as are thus described. But the question is, whether the intrinsic excellence of divine things be the only ground of such emotions—or, whether every movement of affection which is truly gracious, terminate on "the intrinsic excellence of divine things;" while the person's own interest, or the feeling of gratitude

produced by a reception of the divine favour, has only "a secondary and consecutive influence," that is, such an influence, that it would not be gracious at all, but for the fact that it is preceded by a disinterested love of these things?

Now, we hesitate very much about the propriety of giving to such a question an affirmative reply. We have heard, indeed, of persons who wished to see the happiness of heaven annihilated, and the flames of hell extinguished, that they might love God for his own sake; but we regard such language as the raving of religious frenzy, and are much inclined to think, that Edwards himself would have looked upon it in much the same light. In the very formation of such a wish, there is an irreverent impeachment of the existing state of things, as not so favourable to piety as it might have been; but the truth is, the person who forms it knows not what he is doing, and ought to be soothed into sobriety by persuasion, rather than reasoned with on general principles. Our Author's leading argument for the exclusion of self-love from gracious exercises, or at least for confining it in all cases to a secondary place, is, that it is a "natural principle." But this appears to us to be inconclusive. We are to distinguish between self-love and selfishness. The former is not a natural principle, if by natural we mean sinful; for it is as true, that man was created to love himself, and is led to do so by the tendencies of his nature, as that he was created to love his Maker, and is bound to do so by the responsibilities of his nature. Besides, the capacity of loving for its own sake what is in itself excellent, is as really—although, perhaps, not

so conspicuously—natural to man, as that of loving himself, or seeking his comfort or happiness: and if the fact, that the one is natural, be sufficient to divest it of a directly religious character, the same mode of reasoning will place the other in the very same predicament. What, indeed, are all the affections or all the mental powers of the most gracious man on earth, but natural principles, sanctified, and harmonized, and restored to their appropriate uses by the Spirit of God? So that, if the affections which are natural to man as a creature, are on this account to be set aside from those exercises which are truly pious, then he cannot be pious at all; or, at least, the piety which attaches to him by the grace of God, cannot be human, but something foreign to his nature, or entirely distinct from it, which is manifestly absurd.

This, however, is not maintained by our Author, although his reasoning, we fear, implies it. He admits, that the love of one's self, or a desire to possess the benefits of salvation, or gratitude for the enjoyment of these benefits, may be devotional in a collateral way, although that love to God which is detached from self, or disinterested, is so exclusively the essence of genuine piety, that, without its pre-existence in the soul, these other affections cannot be characterized as truly religious. Now it is here that we hesitate, and we cannot help suspecting, that if the argument hinted at be inconclusive, the position itself is untenable. It seems impossible, at least for any practical purpose, to clear out the distinction between what God is in himself, and what he is to us for salvation, so as to make it tangible to ordinary minds: and, under Christianity, we have no view of

him, except that one in which his essential moral excellence is—not simply disclosed as a matter of generous contemplation on our part, but—powerfully set forth under the specific form of goodness to be communicated. But the first feelings of the man whose soul is brought to a *reception* of this goodness, are naturally, that is, constitutionally, feelings of gratitude; and it is by the exercise of this gratitude as a seasonable and immediate duty, that his soul is prepared for devoutly contemplating the grandeur of the character from which it came. Nor can gratitude, originated in this way, although inseparably connected with the man's own interest, be discarded as spurious, for it proceeds from an act of religious compliance with the will of God. If there be a vitiating element in the exercise, it must have its seat not in the gratitude, although it may have descended upon it, but in the supposition that the goodness proffered has been received when it has not. A real reception of saving benefits, must produce a feeling of obligation by the very laws of human nature, and that feeling of obligation must, on its own account, be religious, because it springs from religious principle, and is a deed of commanded homage to the object of Christian worship. That this exercise can be prosecuted without any reference at all to what is intrinsic in the object of worship, is by no means insinuated, for it is but the work of an instant with the human mind to infer, that he who communicates excellence is himself excellent; and it is perhaps impossible for a Christian to exult in the one view of the subject without a feeling of simultaneous admiration produced by the other. This, however, is perfectly consistent with

maintaining that the man who is conscious of either, may safely conclude, that he is adoring the God of salvation.

Had the statement in question been limited by our Author to the saints in heaven, or to some of the most distinguished in the church on earth, there might have been little occasion for remarking on it, for it is every way likely that in the state of perfection, or, in some instances of high maturity among Christians in this world, the love of God is exemplified to a great extent, as he describes it. For the sake of those, however, who though on the way to heaven's perfection, may feel themselves far in the rear, it seems necessary to concede, that this is not a primary but an ulterior attainment. It is the result not simply of a transition from a state of condemnation into one of pardon and friendship with God, but of a process of restoration, either more brief or more protracted, in which the person has been carried forward to a high degree of spirituality; and probably, the feeling of it is lost, or, in some measure, interfered with, on every relapse into sinful indulgence.

To understand the mystery of religious exercise, we must keep it closely in view, that Christianity is not a dispensation of bounty to the innocent, but a remedy for an existing evil; and while the action of its remedial efficacy terminates in the production of a piety, the purest and most sublime, yet it commences its operations, and continues to carry them on, by stimulating the principle of self-preservation. The man approaches the subject at first, under the conviction that he is guilty, and ready to perish; and the first movement of kindly affection within him is not

to the delighted contemplation of what God is in himself, for to this as yet he is utterly incompetent, but to the mercy of God in Jesus Christ *embraced as a benefit*, exactly suited to his case, and freely set before him in the word of the truth of the Gospel. This is a movement in which self-love has not a secondary and consecutive, but a primary and controlling influence; for the man "believes" intentionally and on set purpose, "to the saving of his soul." It is impossible for him to do otherwise in the circumstances of the case. He cannot look with delight on the intrinsic excellence of the God that made him, while he sees it hid in the images of wrath. He cannot adore that excellence, till he feel himself in alliance with it. He cannot so much as behold it with the eye of unbiassed intelligence, till "the light of the knowledge of its glory, *in the face of Jesus Christ*, hath shined in his heart." The gift of God is the very thing which prepares him for extolling the giver. From a contemplation which is altogether disinterested, he is restrained not more by the disorder which sin has entailed upon his spirit, than by the original constituents of his own humanity; for the principle of love to himself is so thoroughly interwoven with his frame, that the exercise of it ought to combine itself with every act of duty, whether to God or man. The question, however, is, whether the exercise of it, as thus described, be in itself a religious exercise: and we conceive it must be so, for this one reason, that it involves a solemn acquiescence in what God has done for sinful men, which is the very soul of religion, at least in its Christian form. A disregard of one's best in-

terests is impiety, even in a general view, because it is a doing of injury to the Creator's handiwork, which every man is bound to venerate in himself as well as in others.

The precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is evidently founded on the assumption that man is bound to love himself, and to carry this affection along with him through the whole circle of relative duty. The chief end of his creation, it is true, is to glorify God; but for that very reason is he bound by an obligation the most sacred, in the first instance to take care of himself, to consult his moral well-being, and to seek relief from his moral malady, that this sublime purpose may be accomplished in his person. By no one act, however, can he do this effectually, without believing on the Son of God for salvation; but by consulting his interest in this way, he is glorifying him as really and as directly, as by contemplating his intrinsic excellence. He is thus yielding homage to the Most High, as a God of faithfulness, or doing him honour in that great point on which he has concentrated his moral attributes, and pledged them all to man in revelation; but if so, then is he obeying the impulses of an enlightened self-love, and giving scope to affections which are truly religious, by one and the same exercise of mind. With this conclusion, the inspired history of primitive conversions, and consequent religious exercises, is in perfect accordance; * and in passages almost innumerable, the principle of self-

* As a specimen, the reader may consult Acts ii. 37—41. and xvi. 26—34.

love is singled out, and appealed to by motives of terror the most arousing, and of kindness the most persuasive. All this is done by him who cannot err, for the express purpose of kindling up in the heart of man the holy flame of adoration; and surely it must be hazardous to say, that those emotions which rise up and respond to such appeals in their true spirit, and in accordance with the precise form in which they are exhibited, are yet destitute of pious ingredients. There are, confessedly, great diversities among the children of grace, as well as among the children of nature; and that test which is applicable to all, must often be too general to be of service to individuals: but while the man whose piety is greatly disinterested, may warrantably feast his soul with the liveliest hopes, the less favoured man, who seldom rises higher than an humble and tremulous thankfulness for "God's unspeakable gift," is not, on this account, to sink into despondency.

It ought to have been mentioned previously to these remarks, that some things in our Author's illustration, in the eleventh chapter of Part II. of this Treatise, are rather obscurely stated, and capable, as they stand, of a hurtful interpretation.* But, from the particular topic which he is there illustrating, and the connection of the passage with what follows, it is evident that he is combating the error of those who maintain, that although a Christian has no present discernment of spiritual things, but is in a dark and

* The passage chiefly referred to, is in the 197th page, beginning with the phrase, "And here I cannot but observe." For a masterly dissection of this topic, the reader is referred to the Author's two Letters to Mr. Gillespie, appended to this edition.

secular frame of mind, he ought not to distrust the goodness of his state, but still to cherish the belief that he is accepted of God. He is not asserting that the man who is in darkness ought not to believe the divine testimony, but that he ought not, by a blind and unreasonable confidence, to boast himself a Christian, in the absence of all legitimate evidence, that, in short, his views must be altered, and the frame of his mind improved; or, in other words, he must come out of the "darkness" of sinful indifference, "into the light" of gracious exercise, before he can *believe* himself to be a child of God.

These strictures are deemed necessary, in justice to the Christian public to whom the volume is offered anew for instruction in righteousness: and although the intelligent reader should approve of their import, as intended to minister a necessary caution, he will very easily perceive that they detract scarcely any thing from its general excellence. The inaccuracies hinted at, although apt to be wounding to pious individuals, yet dwindle into a speck before the solid, and salutary, and lucid discussion with which the work is so richly fraught. They are the slips of a mind whose piety was as uncommon as were its powers of subtile research; and it is not to be wondered at, although somewhat to be regretted, that the high test by which it tried itself, (and might find to be useful, as the entire Treatise certainly was, in no small degree, for neutralizing the excesses of its times,) should be given to the public at large. One thing more, against which the reader ought to be guarded, is a relaxed and cursory perusal of the volume; and, considering the present tendency of the public mind

to what is smooth, and tasteful, and superficial in religious reading, as well as in almost every thing else, there is but too much reason for apprehension here. It is a pitiful thing to see the religious community arrested among the elements of their faith, or amused with mere conceits, instead of being trained to that patience of thought, and comprehensiveness of view, which are so essential to the dignity of the man, and the well-being of the Christian. It is for this cause that so many are weak and sickly among us, and so many asleep. Edwards thought vigorously, and, by the grace of God, he thought to purpose: and to his reader here, as in all his works, it may be said with emphatic truth, you cannot follow him to advantage in the interesting region through which he conducts you—you cannot make your own of the varied moral portraitures which he brings into view—you cannot inhale the spirit of the man, nor see what he saw, nor feel what he felt, unless you surrender to his pages the sharpened power of your intellect, and the wakeful solicitudes of your heart. This is the true state of the case, and to disguise it is to do you injury. But if you make this surrender, which is indeed a reasonable request,—if you make it in the humility of a Christian, and imbue it with the incense of a devout and suppliant spirit, you will find the Treatise a powerful auxiliary to that great system of means by which the "man of God" is made "perfect," being "thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

D. Y.

PERTH, *April*, 1825.

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PREFACE.

THERE is no question whatever of greater importance to mankind, and in which it more concerns every individual to be well resolved, than this, *What are the distinguishing qualifications of those that are in favour with God, and entitled to his eternal rewards?* Or, which comes to the same thing, *What is the nature of true religion? And wherein do lie the distinguishing marks of that virtue and holiness that is acceptable in the sight of God?* But though it be of such importance, and though we have clear and abundant light in the word of God to direct us in this matter, yet there is no one point, in which professing Christians differ more from one another. It would be endless to reckon up the variety of opinions on this point, that divide the Christian world; making manifest the truth of our Saviour's declaration, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leads to life, and few there be that find it."

The consideration of these things has long engaged me to attend to this matter, with the utmost diligence and care, and exactness of search and inquiry of which I have been capable: it is a subject on which my mind has been peculiarly intent, ever since I first entered on the study of divinity. But as to the suc-

cess of my inquiries, it must be left to the judgment of the reader of the following Treatise.

I am sensible it is much more difficult to judge impartially of that which forms the subject of this discourse, in the midst of such a dust and smoke of controversy, as is now in this land, about things of this nature: and as it is more difficult to write impartially, so it is more difficult to read impartially.—Many will probably be hurt in their spirits, to find so much that appertains to religious affection, here condemned: and perhaps indignation and contempt will be excited in others, by finding so much justified and approved. And perhaps some will be ready to charge me with inconsistence with myself, in so much approving some things, and so much condemning others; as I have found this has always been objected to by some, ever since the beginning of our late controversies about religion. It is a hard thing to be a hearty zealous friend of what has been *good* and glorious, in the late extraordinary appearances, and to rejoice much in it: and, at the same time, to see the evil and pernicious tendency of what has been *bad*, and earnestly to oppose it. But, yet, I am humbly, but fully persuaded, we shall never be in the way of truth, nor go on in a way acceptable to God, and tending to the advancement of Christ's kingdom, till we do so. There is indeed something very mysterious in it, that so much good, and so much bad, should be mixed together in the church of God: as it is a mysterious thing, and what has puzzled and amazed many a good Christian, that there should be that which is so divine and precious, as the saving grace of God, and the new and divine

nature, dwelling in the same heart, with so much corruption, hypocrisy, and iniquity, in a particular saint. Yet neither of these is more mysterious than real. And neither of them is a new or rare thing. It is no new thing, that much false religion should prevail, at a time of great reviving of true religion; and that at such a time multitudes of hypocrites should spring up among true saints. It was so in that great reformation and revival of religion in Josiah's time; as appears by Jer. iii. 10. and iv. 3, 4. and also by the great apostacy that there was in the land, so soon after his reign. So it was in that great out-pouring of the Spirit upon the Jews, in the days of John the Baptist: as appears by the great apostacy of that people, so soon after so general an awakening; and the temporary religious comforts and joys of many: "Ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light." So it was in those great commotions that were among the multitude, occasioned by the preaching of Jesus Christ: of the many that were then called, but few chosen; of the multitude that were roused and affected by his preaching, and appeared mightily engaged, full of admiration of Christ, and elevated with joy; but few were true disciples, that stood the shock of the great trials that came afterwards, and endured to the end: many were like the stony ground, or thorny ground; and but few, comparatively, like the good ground. Of the whole heap that was gathered, great part was chaff, that the wind afterwards drove away; and the heap of wheat that was left, was comparatively small; as appears abundantly, by the history of the New Testament. So it was in that great outpouring of the Spirit in the apostles days; as appears

by Matt. xxiv. 10, 13. Gal. iii. 1. and iv. 11, 15. Phil. ii. 21. and iii. 18, 19. and the two epistles to the Corinthians, and many other parts of the New Testament. And so it was in the great reformation from Popery. It appears plainly to have been in the visible church of God, in times of great reviving of religion, as it is with the fruit trees in the spring: there are a multitude of blossoms, all which appear fair and beautiful, and there is a promising appearance of young fruits; but many of them are but of short continuance, they soon fall off and never come to maturity.

Not that we suppose it will always be so; for though there never will, in this world, be an entire purity, either in particular saints, or in the church of God, in a perfect freedom from mixtures of corruption; without any mixture of hypocrites with saints, and counterfeit religion, and false appearances of grace with true religion, and real holiness: yet it is evident, there will come a time of much greater purity in the church of God, than has been in ages past, as is plain by these texts of Scripture.* And one great reason of it will be, that at that time God will give much greater light to his people, to distinguish between true religion and its counterfeits: "and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness." And which is a continuation of the prophecy of the same

* Isa. lii. 1. Ezek. xliv. 6, 7, 9. Joel iii. 17. Zech. xiv. 21. Psal. lxix. 32, 35, 36. Isa. xxxv. 8, 18. and iv. 3, 4. Ezek. xx. 38. Psal. xxxvii. 9, 10, 21, 29.

happy times, " Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not."

It is by the mixture of counterfeit religion with true, not discerned and distinguished, that the devil has had his greatest advantage against the cause and kingdom of Christ hitherto. It is principally by this means that he has prevailed against all revivings of religion that ever have been, since the first founding of the Christian church. By this he hurt the cause of Christianity, in and after the apostolic age, much more than by all the persecutions of both Jews and Heathens: the apostles, in all their epistles, show themselves much more concerned at the former mischief than the latter. By this, Satan prevailed against the reformation, begun by Luther, Zuinglius, &c. to put a stop to its progress, and bring it into disgrace, ten times more than by all those bloody, cruel, and before unheard-of persecutions of the church of Rome. By this, principally, has he prevailed against revivals of religion, that have been in our nation since the reformation. By this, he prevailed against New-England, to quench the love, and spoil the joy of her espousals, about a hundred years ago. And I think I have had opportunity enough to see plainly, that by this the devil has prevailed against the late great revival of religion in New-England, so happy and promising in its beginning: here most evidently has been the main advantage Satan has had against us; by this he has foiled us: it is by this means that the daughter of Zion in this land now lies on the ground, in such piteous circumstances as we now behold her, with her garments rent, her face dis-

figured, her nakedness exposed, her limbs broken, and weltering in the blood of her own wounds, and unable to arise; and this so quickly after her late great joys and hopes: "Zion spreadeth forth her hands, and there is none to comfort her; the Lord hath commanded concerning Jacob, that his adversaries will be round about him: Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman among them." I have seen the devil prevail the same way against two great revivings of religion in this country. Satan goes on with mankind as he began with them. He prevailed against our first parents, cast them out of paradise, and suddenly brought all their happiness and glory to an end, by appearing to be a friend to their happy paradisaic state, and pretending to advance it to higher degrees. So the same cunning serpent that beguiled Eve through his subtlety, by perverting us from the simplicity that is in Christ, hath suddenly prevailed to deprive us of that fair prospect we had a little while ago, of a kind of paradisaic state of the church of God in New-England.

After religion has revived in the church of God, and enemies appear, people that are engaged to defend its cause, are commonly most exposed, where they are least sensible of danger. While they are wholly intent to make head against the opposition that appears openly before them, and neglect carefully to look around them, the devil comes behind them, and gives a fatal stab unseen; and has opportunity to give a more home stroke, and wound the deeper, because he strikes at his leisure, being obstructed by no guard or resistance.

And so it is ever likely to be in the church, when-

ever religion revives remarkably, till we have learned well to distinguish between true and false religion, between saving affections and experiences, and those manifold fair shows, and glistering appearances, by which they are counterfeited; the consequences of which, when they are not distinguished, are often inexpressibly dreadful. By this means the devil gratifies himself, by bringing it to pass, that that should be offered to God by multitudes, under a notion of a pleasing acceptable service to him, which is indeed above all things abominable to him. By this means, he deceives great multitudes about the state of their souls, making them think they are something when they are nothing, and so eternally undoes them; and not only so, but establishes many in a strong confidence of their eminent holiness, who are in God's sight the vilest of hypocrites. By this means, he damps and wounds religion in the hearts of the saints, obscures and deforms it by corrupt mixtures, causes their religious affections wofully to degenerate, and sometimes, for a considerable time, to be like the manna, that bred worms and stank; and dreadfully insnares and confounds the minds of the saints, brings them into great difficulties and temptations, and entangles them in a wilderness, out of which they cannot extricate themselves. By this means, Satan mightily encourages the hearts of open enemies of religion, and strengthens their hands and fills them with weapons, and makes strong their fortresses: when, at the same time, religion and the church of God, lie exposed to them as a city without walls. By this means, he brings it to pass that men work wickedness under a notion of doing God

service, and so sin without restraint, yea, with earnest forwardness and zeal. By this means, he brings in even the friends of religion, insensibly to themselves, to do the work of enemies, by destroying religion in a far more effectual manner than open enemies can do, under a notion of advancing it. By this means, the devil scatters the flock of Christ, and sets them one against another, and that with great heat of spirit, under a notion of zeal for God; and religion, by degrees, degenerates into vain jangling; and, during the strife, Satan leads both parties far out of the right way, driving each to great extremes, one on the right hand, and the other on the left, according as he finds they are most inclined, or most easily swayed, till the right path in the middle is almost wholly neglected. And in the midst of this confusion, the devil has great opportunity to advance his own interest, to make it strong in ways innumerable, and get the government of all into his own hands, to work his own will. And by what is seen of the terrible consequences of this counterfeit religion, when not distinguished from true religion, God's people in general have their minds unhinged and unsettled in things of religion, and know not where to set their foot, or what to think or do; and many are brought into doubts whether there be any thing at all in religion; and heresy, and infidelity, and atheism greatly prevail.

Therefore, it greatly concerns us to use our utmost endeavours, clearly to discern, and have it well settled and established, wherein true religion consists. Till this be done, it may be expected that great revivings of religion will be but of short continuance:

till this be done, there is but little good to be expected of all our warm debates, in conversation and from the press, not knowing clearly and distinctly for what we ought to contend.

My design is to contribute my mite, and use my best (however feeble) endeavours to this end, in the ensuing Treatise; in which it must be noted, that my design is somewhat different from the design which I formerly published, which was to show, *the distinguishing marks of a work of the Spirit of God*, including both his common and saving operations; but what I aim at now, is to show the nature and signs of the *gracious operations* of God's Spirit, by which they are to be distinguished from all things whatever that the minds of men are the subjects of, which are not of a saving nature. If I have succeeded in this my aim, in any tolerable measure, I hope it will tend to promote the interest of religion. And whether I have succeeded to bring any light to this subject, or not, and however my attempt may be reproached, in these captious, censorious times, I hope in the mercy of a gracious and righteous God, for the acceptance of the sincerity of my endeavours; and hope also for the candour and prayers of the true followers of the meek and charitable Lamb of God.

PART I.

CONCERNING THE NATURE OF THE AFFECTIONS, AND THEIR IMPORTANCE IN RELIGION.

PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A

TREATISE

CONCERNING

RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS.

PART I.

CONCERNING THE NATURE OF THE AFFECTIONS, AND THEIR IMPORTANCE IN RELIGION.

1 Peter i. 8.

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

In these words, the apostle represents the state of the minds of the Christians to whom he wrote, under the persecutions to which they were then subject. It is to these persecutions he has respect, in the two preceding verses, when he speaks of the trial of their faith, and of their being in heaviness through manifold temptations.

Such trials are of three-fold benefit to true religion. Hereby its truth is manifested, and it appears to be indeed true religion: trials, above all other things, have a tendency to distinguish between true and false religion, and to make the difference

between them evidently to appear. Hence they are called by the name of trials, in the verse preceding the text, and in many other places: they try the faith and religion of professors, of what sort it is, as apparent gold is tried in the fire, and manifested whether it be true gold or not. And the faith of true Christians being thus tried and proved to be true, is found, as stated in that verse, to praise, and honour, and glory.

Besides, these trials are of further benefit to true religion; they not only manifest its truth, but they make its genuine beauty and amiableness remarkably to appear. True virtue never appears so lovely, as when it is most oppressed; and the divine excellency of real Christianity is never exhibited with such advantage, as when under the greatest trials: then it is that true faith appears much more precious than gold; and, upon this account, is found to praise, and honour, and glory.

Again, another benefit of such trials to true religion is, that they purify and increase it. They not only manifest it to be true, but they tend to refine it, and deliver it from those false mixtures which incumber and impede it, that nothing may be left but that which is true. They not only tend to make the amiableness of true religion appear to the best advantage, but they tend to increase its beauty, by establishing and confirming it, making it more lively and vigorous, and purifying it from those things that obscured its lustre and glory. As gold that is tried in the fire is purged from its alloy, and all remainders of dross, and comes forth more solid and beautiful; so true faith being tried like gold in the fire, becomes

more precious; and thus also is found unto praise, and honour, and glory. The apostle seems to have respect to each of these benefits of persecution to true religion, in the verse preceding the text.

And in the text, the apostle observes how true religion operated in the Christians to whom he wrote, under their persecutions, by which these benefits of persecution appeared in them. It was by these persecutions their religion was manifested to be true religion, and eminently appeared in its genuine beauty and amiableness; and it also appeared to be increased and purified, and so was found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ. And there were two kinds of operation, or exercise of true religion, in them, under their sufferings, of which the apostle takes notice in the text, wherein these benefits appeared.

1. Love to Christ: "Whom having not seen, ye love." The world was ready to wonder, what strange principle it was that influenced them to expose themselves to so great sufferings, to forsake the things that were seen, and renounce all those objects of sense that were dear and pleasant. They seemed to the men of the world as though they were beside themselves, and to act as though they hated themselves; there was nothing in their view that could induce them thus to suffer, or to support them under, and carry them through, such trials. But although there was nothing visible that the world saw, or that the Christians themselves ever saw with their bodily eyes, that thus influenced and supported them, yet they had a supernatural principle of love to something unseen; they loved Jesus Christ, for they saw him

spiritually whom the world saw not, and whom they themselves had never seen with bodily eyes.

2. Joy in Christ. Though their outward sufferings were very grievous, yet their inward spiritual joys were greater than their sufferings; and these supported and enabled them to suffer with cheerfulness.

There are two things of which the apostle takes notice in the text concerning this joy. 1st, The manner in which it rises, and the way in which Christ, though unseen, is the foundation of it, namely, by faith; which is the evidence of things not seen: "In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice." 2d, The nature of this joy; "unspeakable, and full of glory." Unspeakable in the nature of it; very different from worldly joys, and carnal delights; of a vastly more pure, sublime, and heavenly nature, being something supernatural, and truly divine; and so ineffably excellent, that there were no words to set forth the sublimity and exquisite sweetness of it. It was unspeakable also in degree; it pleasing God to give them this holy joy, with a liberal hand, and in large measure, in their state of persecution.

Their joy was full of glory. Although the joy was unspeakable, and no words were sufficient to describe it, yet something might be said of it, and no words more fit to represent its excellency than these, that it was full of glory; or, as it is in the original, *glorified joy*. In rejoicing with this joy, their minds were filled, as it were, with a glorious brightness, and their natures exalted and perfected. It was a most worthy, noble rejoicing, that did not corrupt and debase the mind, as many carnal joys do; but did greatly beautify and dignify it: it was a prelibation of the

joy of heaven, that raised their minds to a degree of heavenly blessedness; it filled their minds with the light of God's glory, and made themselves to shine with some communication of that glory.

Hence, the proposition or doctrine that I would draw from these words is this—

DOCTRINE—*True religion, in a great measure, consists in holy affections.*

We see that the apostle, in observing the operations and exercises of religion in the Christians to whom he wrote, and in remarking wherein their religion appeared to be true and of the right kind, when it had its greatest trial, being tried by persecution of what sort it was, as gold is tried in the fire, and when their religion not only proved true, but was most pure, and cleansed from its mixtures of that which was not true, and when religion appeared in them most in its genuine excellency and native beauty, and was found to praise, and honour, and glory,—he singles out the religious affections of love and joy, that were then in exercise in them: these are the exercises of religion of which he takes notice, wherein their religion did thus appear true and pure, and in its proper glory. Here I would,

I. Show what is intended by the affections.

II. Observe some things which make it evident, that a great part of true religion lies in the affections.

CHAPTER I.

The Affections are nothing else than the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the Inclination and Will of the Soul.

God has endued the soul with two faculties: One is that by which it is capable of perception and speculation, or by which it discerns, and views, and judges of things; which is called the *understanding*. The other is that by which the soul does not merely perceive and view things, but is some way inclined with respect to the things it views or considers; either is inclined *to* them, or is disinclined, and averse *from* them: or it is the faculty by which the soul does not behold things, as an indifferent, unaffected spectator, but either as liking or disliking, pleased or displeased, approving or rejecting. This faculty is called by various names: it is sometimes called the *inclination;* and, as it has respect to the actions that are determined and governed by it, is called the *will:* and the mind, with regard to the exercises of this faculty, is often called the *heart*.

The exercises of this faculty are of two sorts: either those by which the soul is carried out towards the things that are in view, in approving of them, being pleased with them, and inclined to them; or those in which the soul opposes the things that are in view, in disapproving them, being displeased with them, averse from them, and rejecting them.

And as the exercises of the inclination and will of

the soul are various in their kinds, so they are much more various in their degrees. There are some exercises of pleasedness or displeasedness, inclination or disinclination, wherein the soul is carried but a little beyond a state of perfect indifference. And there are other degrees above this, wherein the approbation or dislike, pleasedness or aversion, are stronger; and we may rise higher and higher, till the soul comes to act vigorously and sensibly, and the actings of the soul come to that strength, that (through the laws of the union which the Creator has fixed between soul and body) the motion of the blood and animal spirits begin to be sensibly altered; whence oftentimes arises some bodily sensation, especially about the heart and vitals, that are the fountain of the fluids of the body: from whence it comes to pass, that the mind, with regard to the exercises of this faculty, perhaps in all nations and ages, is called the *heart*. They are, therefore, these more vigorous and sensible exercises of this faculty, that are called the *affections*.

The will, and the affections of the soul, are not two faculties: the affections are not essentially distinct from the will, nor do they differ from the mere actings of the will, and inclinations of the soul, but only in the liveliness and sensibleness of exercise.

It must be confessed, that language is here somewhat imperfect, and the meaning of words in a considerable measure loose and unfixed, and not precisely limited by custom, which governs the use of language. In some sense, the affection of the soul differs nothing at all from the will and inclination, and the will never is in any exercise any further than it is affected; it is not moved out of a state of perfect indifference, any

otherwise than as it is affected one way or other. But yet there are many actings of the will and inclination, that are not so commonly called *affections:* in every thing we do, wherein we act voluntarily, there is an exercise of the will and inclination; it is our inclination that governs us in our actions: but all the actings of the inclination and will, in all our common actions of life, are not ordinarily called *affections.* Yet, what are commonly called affections are not essentially different from them, but only in the degree and manner of exercise. In every act of the will whatever, the soul either likes or dislikes, is either inclined or disinclined, to what is in view: these are not essentially different from those affections of love and hatred: that liking or inclination of the soul to a thing, if it be in a high degree, and be vigorous and lively, is the very same thing with the affection of love: and that disliking and disinclining, if in a great degree, is the very same with hatred. In every act of the will for, or towards something not present, the soul is in some degree inclined to that thing; and that inclination, if in a considerable degree, is the very same with the affection of desire. And in every act of the will, wherein the soul approves of something present, there is a degree of pleasedness; and that pleasedness, if it be in a considerable degree, is the very same with the affection of joy or delight. And if the will disapproves of what is present, the soul is in some degree displeased; and if that displeasedness be great, it is the very same with the affection of grief or sorrow.

Such seems to be our nature, and such the laws of the union of soul and body, that there never is, in any case whatever, any lively and vigorous exercises

of the will or inclination of the soul, without some effect upon the body, in some alteration of the motion of its fluids, and especially of the animal spirits. And, on the other hand, from the same laws of the union of soul and body, the constitution of the body, and the motion of its fluids, may promote the exercise of the affections. But yet it is not the body, but the mind only, that is the proper seat of the affections. The body of man is no more capable of being really the subject of love or hatred, joy or sorrow, fear or hope, than the body of a tree, or than the same body of a man is capable of thinking and understanding. As it is the soul only that has ideas, so it is the soul only that is pleased or displeased with its ideas. As it is the soul only that thinks, so it is the soul only that loves or hates, rejoices or is grieved at what it thinks of. Nor are these motions of the animal spirits, and fluids of the body, any thing properly belonging to the nature of the affections, though they always accompany them in the present state; but are only effects or concomitants of the affections, that are entirely distinct from the affections themselves, and no way essential to them: so that an unbodied spirit may be as capable of love and hatred, joy or sorrow, hope or fear, or other affections, as one that is united to a body.

The affections and passions are frequently spoken of as the same; and yet, in the more common use of speech, there is in some respect a difference; and affection is a word, that, in its ordinary signification, seems to be something more extensive than passion, being used for all vigorous lively actings of the will or inclination; but passion for those that are more

sudden, and whose effects on the animal spirits are more violent, and the mind more overpowered, and less in its own command.

As all the exercises of the inclination and will are either in approving and liking, or disapproving and rejecting, so the affections are of two sorts; they are those by which the soul is carried out to what is in view, cleaving to it, or seeking it; or those by which it is averse from it, and opposes it.

Of the former sort are love, desire, hope, joy, gratitude, complacence. Of the latter kind are, hatred, fear, anger, grief, and such like; which it is needless now particularly to define.

And there are some affections in which there is a composition of each of the after-mentioned kinds of actings of the will; as in the affection of *pity* there is something of the former kind, towards the person suffering, and something of the latter, towards what he suffers. And so in *zeal*, there is in it high approbation of some person or thing, together with vigorous opposition to what is conceived to be contrary to it.

CHAPTER II.

True Religion, in a great measure, consists in the Affections.

1. What has been said of the nature of the affections makes this evident, and may be sufficient, without adding any thing further, to put this matter beyond doubt; for who will deny that true reli-

gion consists, in a great measure, in vigorous and lively actings of the inclination and will of the soul, or the fervent exercises of the heart?

That religion which God requires, and will accept, does not consist in weak, dull, and lifeless wouldings, raising us but a little above a state of indifference: God, in his word, insists greatly upon it, that we be in good earnest, fervent in spirit, and have our hearts vigorously engaged in religion: "Be ye fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul?" "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." It is such a fervent, vigorous engagedness of the heart in religion, that is the fruit of a real circumcision of the heart, or true regeneration, and that has the promises of life: "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."

If we be not in good earnest in religion, and our wills and inclinations be not strongly exercised, we are nothing. The things of religion are so great, that there can be no suitableness in the exercises of our hearts, to their nature and importance, unless they be lively and powerful. In nothing is vigour in the actings of our inclinations so requisite, as in religion; and in nothing is lukewarmness so odious. True religion is evermore a powerful thing; and the

power of it appears, in the first place, in its inward exercises in the heart, which is the principal and original seat of it. Hence true religion is called the "power of godliness," in distinction from the external appearances that are the "form" of it: "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power of it." The Spirit of God, in those that have sound and solid religion, is a spirit of powerful holy affection; and therefore, God is said to have given them "the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." And such, when they receive the Spirit of God in his sanctifying and saving influences, are said to be "baptized with the Holy Ghost, and with fire," by reason of the power and fervour of those exercises the Spirit of God excites in their hearts, whereby their hearts, when grace is in exercise, may be said "to burn within them;" as it is said of the disciples.

The business of religion is compared to those exercises, wherein men are wont to have their hearts and strength greatly exercised and engaged; such as running, wrestling, or agonizing for a great prize or crown, and fighting with strong enemies that seek our lives, and warring as those that by violence take a city or kingdom.

And though true grace has various degrees, and there are some that are but babes in Christ, in whom the exercise of the inclination and will towards divine and heavenly things is comparatively weak; yet every one that has the power of godliness in his heart, has his inclinations and heart exercised towards God and divine things, with such strength and vigour, that these holy exercises do prevail in him above all car-

nal or natural affections, and are effectual to overcome them: for every true disciple of Christ loves him above father or mother, wife and children, brethren and sisters, houses and lands; yea, than his own life. From hence it follows, that wherever true religion is, there are vigorous exercises of the inclination and will towards divine objects: but from what was said before, the vigorous, lively, and sensible exercises of the will, are no other than the affections of the soul.

2. The Author of the human nature has not only given affections to men, but has made them very much the spring of men's actions. As the affections do not only necessarily belong to the human nature, but are a very great part of it; so (inasmuch as by regeneration, persons are renewed in the whole man, and sanctified throughout) holy affections do not only necessarily belong to true religion, but are a very great part of it. And as true religion is of a practical nature, and God hath so constituted the human nature, that the affections are very much the spring of men's actions, this also shows, that true religion must consist very much in the affections.

Such is man's nature, that he is very inactive, unless when he is influenced by love or hatred, desire, hope, fear, or some other affection. These affections we see to be the springs that set men agoing in all the affairs of life, and engage them in all their pursuits: these are the things that put men forward, and carry them along in all their worldly business: and men are especially excited and animated by these, in all affairs wherein they are earnestly engaged, and which they pursue with vigour. We see mankind to be exceedingly busy and active: and the affections

of men are the springs of the motion: take away all love and hatred, all hope and fear, all anger, zeal, and affectionate desire, and the world would be, in a great measure, motionless and dead; there would be no such thing as activity amongst mankind, or any earnest pursuit whatever. It is affection that engages the covetous man, and him that is greedy of worldly profits, in his pursuits; it is by the affections that the ambitious man is urged forward in his pursuit of worldly glory; and it is the affections that actuate the voluptuous man, in his pursuit of pleasure and sensual delights. The world continues, from age to age, in a continual commotion and agitation, in a pursuit of these things; but take away all affection, and the spring of all this motion would be gone, and the motion itself would cease. And as in worldly things, worldly affections are very much the spring of men's motion and action; so in religious matters, the spring of their actions are very much religious affections: he that has doctrinal knowledge and speculation only, without affection, never is engaged in the business of religion.

3. Nothing is more manifest in fact, than that the things of religion take hold of men's souls no further than they affect them. There are multitudes that often hear the word of God, and therein hear of those things that are infinitely great and important, and that most nearly concern them, and all that is heard seems to be wholly ineffectual upon them, and to make no alteration in their disposition or behaviour; and the reason is, they are not affected with what they hear. There are many that often hear of the glorious perfections of God, his almighty power

and boundless wisdom, his infinite majesty, and that holiness of God, by which he is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity, and the heavens are not pure in his sight, and of God's infinite goodness and mercy; and hear of the great works of God's wisdom, power, and goodness, wherein there appear the admirable manifestations of these perfections; they hear particularly of the unspeakable love of God and Christ, and of the great things that Christ has done and suffered, and of the great things of another world, of eternal misery, in bearing the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, and of endless blessedness and glory in the presence of God, and the enjoyment of his dear love: they also hear the peremptory commands of God, and his gracious counsels and warnings, and the sweet invitations of the gospel; I say, they often hear these things, and yet remain as they were before, with no sensible alteration on them, either in heart or practice, because they are not affected with what they hear; and they ever will be so till they are affected. I am bold to assert, that there never was any considerable change wrought in the mind or conversation of any person, by any thing of a religious nature, that ever he read, heard, or saw, that had not his affections moved. Never was a natural man engaged earnestly to seek his salvation; never were any such brought to cry after wisdom, and lift up their voice for understanding, and to wrestle with God in prayer for mercy; and never was one humbled, and brought to the foot of God, from any thing that ever he heard or imagined of his own unworthiness and deservings of God's displeasure; nor was ever one induced to

fly for refuge unto Christ, while his heart remained unaffected. Nor was there ever a saint awakened out of a cold, lifeless frame, or recovered from a declining state in religion, and brought back from a lamentable departure from God, without having his heart affected. And, in a word, there never was any thing considerable brought to pass in the heart or life of any man living, by the things of religion, that had not his heart deeply affected by those.

4. The holy Scriptures do every where place religion very much in the affections; such as fear, hope, love, hatred, desire, joy, sorrow, gratitude, compassion, and zeal.

The Scriptures place much of religion in godly *fear;* insomuch that it is often spoken of as the character of those that are truly religious, that they tremble at God's word, that they fear before him, that their flesh trembles for fear of him, and that they are afraid of his judgments, that his excellency makes them afraid, and his dread falls upon them; and an appellation commonly given the saints in Scripture is, *fearers of God*, or they that fear the Lord. And because the fear of God is a great part of true godliness, hence true godliness, in general, is very commonly called *the fear of God.*

So *hope* in God and in the promises of his word, is often spoken of in the Scripture, as a very considerable part of true religion. It is mentioned as one of the three great things of which religion consists. Hope in the Lord is also frequently mentioned as the character of the saints: "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God." "Blessed is the man that

trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." "Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord." Religious fear and hope are, once and again, joined together, as jointly constituting the character of the true saints: "Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy." "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy." Hope is so great a part of true religion, that the apostle says, "We are saved by hope." And this is spoken of as the helmet of the Christian soldier: "And for a helmet, the hope of salvation;" and the sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, which preserves it from being cast away by the storms of this evil world: "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail." It is spoken of as a great fruit and benefit which true saints receive by Christ's resurrection: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

The Scriptures place religion very much in the affection of *love;* in love to God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and love to the people of God, and to mankind. The texts in which this is manifest, both in the Old and New Testament, are innumerable. But of this more afterwards.

The contrary affection of *hatred* also, as having sin for its object, is spoken of in Scripture as no inconsiderable part of true religion. It is spoken of as that by which true religion may be known and dis-

tinguished: "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." And accordingly the saints are called upon to give evidence of their sincerity by this: "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." And the Psalmist often mentions it as an evidence of his sincerity: "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside." "I hate every false way." "Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate thee?"

So *holy desire*, exercised in longings, hungerings, and thirstings after God and holiness, is often mentioned in Scripture as an important part of true religion: "The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee." "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times." Such a holy desire and thirst of soul is mentioned, as one of those great things which renders or denotes a man truly blessed,

in the beginning of Christ's sermon on the mount: "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." And this holy thirst is spoken of, as a great thing in the condition of a participation of the blessings of eternal life: "I will give to him that is athirst, of the fountian of the water of life freely."

The Scriptures speak of holy *joy* as a great part of true religion. So it is represented in the text. And as an important part of religion, it is often exhorted to, and pressed with great earnestness: "Delight thyself in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous." "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad." "Finally, brethren, rejoice in the Lord." "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again, I say, Rejoice." "Rejoice evermore." "Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." This is mentioned among the principal fruits of the Spirit of grace: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy," &c. The Psalmist mentions his holy joy as an evidence of his sincerity: "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches."

Religious *sorrow*, *mourning*, and *brokenness of heart*, are also frequently spoken of as a great part of true religion. These things are often mentioned as distinguishing qualities of the true saints, and a great part of their character: "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." "The Lord hath anointed me—to bind up the broken-hearted—

to comfort all that mourn." This godly sorrow and brokenness of heart is often spoken of, not only as a great thing in the distinguishing character of the saints, but as that in them, which is peculiarly acceptable and pleasing to God: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit."

Another affection often mentioned, as that in the exercise of which much of true religion appears, is *gratitude;* especially as exercised in thankfulness, and praise to God. This being so much spoken of in the book of Psalms, and other parts of the holy Scriptures, I need not mention particular texts.

Again, the holy Scriptures frequently speak of *compassion* or *mercy*, as a very great and essential thing in true religion; insomuch that good men are in Scripture denominated by this; and a merciful man, and a good man, are equivalent terms in Scripture: "The righteous man perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: merciful men are taken away." And the Scripture chooses out this quality, as that by which, in a peculiar manner, a righteous man is deciphered: "The righteous showeth mercy, and giveth." "He is ever merciful, and lendeth." "He that honoureth the Lord, hath mercy on the poor." "Put ye on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies," &c. This is one of those great

things, by which those who are truly blessed are described by our Saviour: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." And this Christ also speaks of, as one of the weightier matters of the law: "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." To the same purpose is that passage, "He shall show thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice, and love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God?" And also, "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice;" which seems to have been a text much delighted in by our Saviour, by his manner of citing it once and again.

Zeal is also spoken of, as a very essential part of the religion of true saints. It is spoken of as a great object Christ had in view, in giving himself for our redemption: "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." And this is spoken of as the great thing wanting in the lukewarm Laodiceans.

I have mentioned but a few texts, out of many in the Scripture, which place religion very much in the affections. But what has been observed may be sufficient to show, that they who would deny that much of true religion lies in the affections, must throw away what we have been wont to own for our Bible, and get some other rule by which to judge of the nature of religion.

5. The Scriptures represent true religion as being summarily comprehended in *love*, the chief of the affections, and fountain of all other affections.

So our blessed Saviour represents the matter, in answer to the lawyer, who asked him, which was the great commandment of the law: "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Which last words signify, that these two commandments comprehend all the duty prescribed, and the religion taught, in the law and the prophets. And the apostle Paul makes the same representation of the matter: "He that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law." "Love is the fulfilling of the law." "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." "Now, the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart," &c. The same apostle speaks of love, as the greatest thing in religion, and as the vitals, essence, and soul of it; without which, the greatest knowledge and gifts, the most glaring profession, and every thing else which appertains to religion, are vain and worthless; and represents it as the fountain from whence proceeds all that is good, in 1 Cor. xiii. throughout; for that which is there rendered *charity*, in the original is *αγαπη*, the proper English of which is *love*.

Now, although it be true that the love thus spoken of includes the whole of a sincerely benevolent propensity of the soul towards God and man, yet it is evident, from what has been before observed, that this propensity, or inclination of the soul, when in sensible or vigorous exercise, becomes affection, and

is no other than affectionate love. And surely it is such vigorous and fervent love which Christ speaks of as the sum of all religion, when he speaks of loving God with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our minds, and our neighbour as ourselves, as the sum of all that was taught and prescribed in the law and the prophets.

Indeed it cannot be supposed, when this affection of love is here, and in other scriptures, spoken of as the sum of all religion, that hereby is meant the act, exclusive of the habit, or that the exercise of the understanding is excluded, which is implied in all reasonable affection. But it is evident from these scriptures, that the essence of all true religion lies in holy love; and that in this divine affection, and an habitual disposition to it, and that light which is the foundation of it, and those things which are the fruits of it, consists the whole of religion.

From hence it clearly and certainly appears, that great part of true religion consists in the affections. For love is not only one of the affections, but it is the first and chief of them, and the fountain of all the affections. From love arises hatred of those things which are contrary to what we love, or which oppose and thwart us in those things in which we delight: and from the various exercises of love and hatred, according to the circumstances of the objects of these affections, as present or absent, certain or uncertain, probable or improbable, arise all those other affections of desire, hope, fear, joy, grief, gratitude, anger, &c. From a vigorous, affectionate, and fervent love to God, will necessarily arise other religious affections; hence will arise an intense hatred and ab-

horrence of sin, fear of sin, and a dread of God's displeasure, gratitude to God for his goodness, complacence and joy in God when God is graciously and sensibly present, and grief when he is absent, and a joyful hope when a future enjoyment of God is expected, and fervent zeal for the glory of God. And, in like manner, from a fervent love to men, will arise all other virtuous affections towards men.

6. The religion of the most eminent saints of which we have an account in Scripture, consisted much in holy affections.

I shall take particular notice of three eminent saints, who have expressed the frame and sentiments of their own hearts, and so described their own religion, and the manner of their intercourse with God.

The first I shall take notice of is David, that man after God's own heart; who has given us a lively portraiture of his religion in the book of Psalms. These holy songs of his are nothing else but the expressions and breathings of devout and holy affections: such as an humble and fervent love to God; admiration of his glorious perfections and wonderful works; earnest desires, thirstings, and pantings of soul after God; delight and joy in God; a sweet and melting gratitude to God for his great goodness; a holy exultation and triumph of soul in the favour, sufficiency, and faithfulness of God; his love to, and delight in the saints, the excellent of the earth; his great delight in the word and ordinances of God; his grief for his own and others' sins; and his fervent zeal for God, and against the enemies of God and his church. And these expressions of holy affection, with which the Psalms of David abound, are

the more to our present purpose, because those psalms are not only the expressions of the religion of so eminent a saint, of whom God speaks as so agreeable to his mind; but were also, by the direction of the Holy Ghost, penned for the use of the church of God in its public worship, not only in that age, but in after ages; as being fitted to express the religion of all saints, in all ages, as well as the religion of the Psalmist. And it is moreover to be observed, that David, in the book of Psalms, speaks not as a private person, but as the Psalmist of Israel, as the subordinate head of the church of God, and leader in their worship and praises; and in many of the psalms speaks in the name of Christ, as personating him in these breathings forth of holy affection; and in many other psalms, he speaks in the name of the church.

Another instance I shall observe, is the apostle Paul, who was in many respects the chief of all the ministers of the New Testament; being, above all others, a chosen vessel unto Christ, to bear his name before the Gentiles, and made the chief instrument of propagating and establishing the Christian church in the world, and of distinctly revealing the glorious mysteries of the gospel, for the instruction of the church in all ages; and (as has not been improbably thought by some) the most eminent servant of Christ that ever lived, received to the highest rewards in the heavenly kingdom of his Master. By what is said of him in the Scripture, he appears to have been a person that was full of affection. And it is very manifest, that the religion he expresses in his epistles consisted very much in holy affections. It appears by all his expressions of himself, that he was, in the

course of his life, inflamed, actuated, and entirely swallowed up, by a most ardent love to his glorious Lord, esteeming all things as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of him, and esteeming them but dung that he might win him. He represents himself as overpowered by this holy affection, and as it were compelled by it to go forward in his service through all difficulties and sufferings. And his epistles are full of expressions of an overflowing affection towards the people of Christ: he speaks of his dear love to them; of his abundant love; and of his affectionate and tender love, as of a nurse towards her children: "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us." So also he speaks of his bowels of love, and of his earnest care for others, and of his bowels of pity, or mercy, towards them; and of his concern for others, even to anguish of heart: "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you, with many tears; not that you should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you." He speaks of the great conflict of his soul for them. He speaks of great and continual grief that he had in his heart from compassion to the Jews. He speaks of his mouth being opened, and his heart enlarged towards Christians: "O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged." He often speaks of his affectionate and longing desires.* The same apostle is very often,

* 1 Thess. ii. 8. Rom. i. 11. Phil. i. 8. and iv. 1. 2 Tim. i. 4.

in his epistles, expressing the affection of joy.* He speaks of his rejoicing with great joy,† of his joying and rejoicing,‡ and of his rejoicing exceedingly,§ and of his being filled with comfort, and being exceeding joyful.‖ He speaks of himself as always rejoicing.¶ So he speaks of the triumphs of his soul,** and of his glorying in tribulation.†† He also expresses the affection of hope;‡‡ he speaks of his earnest expectation, and his hope. He likewise expresses an affection of godly jealousy.§§ And it appears by his whole history after his conversion, in the Acts, and also by all his epistles, and the accounts he gives of himself there, that the affection of zeal, as having the cause of his Master, and the interest and prosperity of his church, for its object, was mighty in him, continually inflaming his heart, strongly engaging to those great and constant labours he went through, in instructing, exhorting, warning, and reproving others, travailing in birth with them; conflicting with those powerful and innumerable enemies who continually opposed him, wrestling with principalities and powers, not fighting as one who beats the air; running the race set before him, continually pressing forward through all manner of difficulties and sufferings; so that others thought him quite beside himself. And how full he was of affection, appears by his being so full of tears:‖‖ he speaks of his

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* 2 Cor. i. 12. and vii. 7, 9, 16. Phil. i. 4. and ii. 12. and iii. 3. Col. i. 24. 1 Thess. iii. 9. † Phil. iv. 10. Philem. i. 7. ‡ Phil. ii. 1, 7. § 2 Cor. vii. 13. ‖ 2 Cor. vii. 4. ¶ 2 Cor. vi. 10. ** 2 Cor. ii. 14. †† 2 Thess. i. 4. and Rom. v. 3. ‡‡ Phil. i. 20. §§ 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3. ‖‖ 2 Cor. ii. 4.

many tears; and of his tears that he shed continually night and day.

Now, if any one can consider these accounts given in the Scripture of this great apostle, and which he gives of himself, and yet not see that his religion consisted much in affection, must have a strange faculty of managing his eyes, to shut out the light which shines most full in his face.

The other instance I shall mention, is the apostle John, that beloved disciple, who was the nearest and dearest to his Master of any of the twelve, and was by him admitted to the greatest privileges of any of them; being not only one of the three who were admitted to be present with him in the mount at his transfiguration, and at the raising of Jairus' daughter, and whom he took with him when he was in his agony, and one of the three spoken of by the apostle Paul, as the three main pillars of the Christian church; but was favoured above all, in being admitted to lean upon his Master's bosom, at his last supper, and in being chosen by Christ, as the disciple to whom he would reveal his wonderful dispensations towards his church, to the end of time; as we have an account in the book of Revelation: and to shut up the canon of the New Testament, and of the whole Scripture; being preserved much longer than all the rest of the apostles, to set all things in order in the Christian church, after their death.

It is evident by all his writings, (as is generally observed by divines,) that he was a person remarkably full of affection: his addresses to those to whom he wrote, being inexpressibly tender and pathetical, breathing nothing but the most fervent love; as

though he were all made up of sweet and holy affection. The proofs of which cannot be given without disadvantage, unless we should transcribe his whole writings.

7. He whom God sent into the world, to be the light of the world, and head of the whole church, and the perfect example of true religion and virtue, for the imitation of all, the Shepherd whom the whole flock should follow wherever he goes, even the Lord Jesus Christ, was a person who was of a remarkably tender and affectionate heart; and his virtue was expressed very much in the exercise of holy affections. He was the greatest instance of ardency, vigour, and strength of love, to both God and man, that ever was. It was these affections which got the victory, in that mighty struggle and conflict of his affections, in his agonies, when he "prayed more earnestly, and offered up strong crying and tears," and wrestled in tears and in blood. Such was the power of the exercises of his holy love, that they were stronger than death, and in that great struggle overcame those strong exercises of the natural affections of fear and grief, when he was sore amazed, and his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. And he also appeared to be full of affection in the course of his life. We read of his great zeal: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." We read of his grief for the sins of men: "He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts;" and his breaking forth into tears and exclamations, from the consideration of the sin and misery of ungodly men, and on the sight of the city of Jerusalem, which was full of such inhabitants:

" And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." " O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee: how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not?" We read of Christ's earnest desire, " With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." We often read of the affection of pity or compassion in Christ,* and of his being moved with compassion.† And how tender did his heart appear to be, on occasion of Mary and Martha's mourning for their brother, and coming to him with their complaints and tears? Their tears soon drew tears from his eyes; he was affected with their grief, and wept with them; though he knew their sorrow should so soon be turned into joy, by their brother's being raised from the dead. And how ineffably affectionate was the last and dying discourse which Jesus had with his eleven disciples, the evening before he was crucified; when he told them he was going away, and foretold the great difficulties and sufferings they should meet with in the world when he was gone; and comforted and counselled them, as his little dear children; and bequeathed to them his Holy Spirit, and therein his peace, and his comfort and joy, as it were in his last will and testament; and concluded the whole with that affectionate

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* Matth. xv. 32. and xviii. 34. Luke vii. 13.
† Matth. ix. 36. and xiv. 14. and Mark vi. 34.

intercessory prayer for them and his whole church? Of all the discourses ever penned, or uttered by the mouth of any man, this seems to be the most affectionate and affecting.

8. The religion of heaven consists very much in affection.

There is doubtless true religion in heaven, and true religion in its utmost purity and perfection. But, according to the Scripture representation of the heavenly state, the religion of heaven consists chiefly in holy and mighty love and joy, and the expression of these in most fervent and exalted praises. So that the religion of the saints in heaven, consists in the same things with that religion of the saints on earth, which is spoken of in our text, namely, "love and joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Now, it would be very foolish to pretend, that because the saints in heaven are not united to flesh and blood, and have no animal fluids to be moved (through the laws of union of soul and body) with those great emotions of their souls, that therefore their exceeding love and joy are no affections. We are not speaking of the affections of the body, but of the affections of the soul, the chief of which are love and joy. When these are in the soul, whether that be in the body or out of it, the soul is affected and moved. And when they are in the soul, in that strength in which they are in the saints in heaven, the soul is mightily affected and moved, or, which is the same thing, has great affections. It is true, we do not experimentally know what love and joy are in a soul out of a body, or in a glorified body; that is, we have not had experience of love and joy in a soul in

these circumstances; but the saints on earth do know that divine love and joy in the soul are of the same kind with the love and joy which are in heaven, in separate souls there. The love and joy of the saints on earth, is the beginning and dawning of the light, life, and blessedness of heaven, and is like their love and joy there; or rather the same in nature, though not the same with it in degree and circumstances. This is evident by many scriptures.* It is unreasonable, therefore, to suppose, that the love and joy of the saints in heaven, not only differ in degree and circumstances from the holy love and joy of the saints on earth, but are so entirely different in nature that they are no affections; and merely because they have no blood and animal spirits to be set in motion by them, which motion of the blood and animal spirits is not of the essence of these affections in men on the earth, but the effect of them; although by their re-action they may make some circumstantial difference in the sensation of the mind. There is a sensation of the mind which loves and rejoices, that is antecedent to any effects on the fluids of the body; and this sensation of the mind, therefore, does depend on these motions in the body, and so may be in the soul without the body. And wherever there are the exercises of love and joy, there is that sensation of the mind, whether it be in or out of the body; and that inward sensation, or kind of spiritual sense, or feeling, and motion, of the soul, is what is called affection: the soul when it thus feels, (if I may so

* Prov. iv. 18. John iv. 14. and vi. 40, 47, 50, 51, 54, 58. 1 John iii. 15. 1 Cor. xiii. 8–12.

say,) and is thus moved, is said to be affected, and especially when this inward sensation and motion are in a very high degree, as they can be in the saints in heaven. If we can learn any thing of the state of heaven from Scripture, the love and joy which the saints have there is exceedingly great and vigorous; impressing the heart with the strongest and most lively sensation of inexpressible sweetness; mightily moving, animating, and engaging them; making them like to a flame of fire. And if such love and joy be not affections, then the word affection is of no use in language. Will any say, that the saints in heaven, in beholding the face of their Father, and the glory of their Redeemer, and contemplating his wonderful works, and particularly his laying down his life for them, have their hearts nothing moved and affected by all that they behold or consider?

Hence, therefore, the religion of heaven, consisting chiefly in holy love and joy, consists very much in affection: and therefore, undoubtedly, true religion consists very much in affection. The way to learn the true nature of any thing, is to go where that thing is to be found in its purity and perfection. If we would know the nature of true gold, we must view it not in the ore, but when it is refined. If we would learn what true religion is, we must go where there is true religion, and nothing but true religion, in its highest perfection, without any defect or mixture. All who are truly religious are not of this world, they are strangers here, and belong to heaven; they are born from above, heaven is their native country, and the nature which they receive by this

heavenly birth, is a heavenly nature, they receive an anointing from above: that principle of true religion which is in them, is communication of the religion of heaven: their grace is the dawn of glory; and God fits them for that world by conforming them to it.

9. This appears from the nature and design of the ordinances and duties which God hath appointed as means and expressions of true religion.

To instance in the duty of prayer: It is manifest, we are not appointed, in this duty, to declare God's perfections, his majesty, holiness, goodness, and all-sufficiency, and our own meanness, emptiness, dependence, and unworthiness, and our wants and desires, to inform God of these things, or to incline his heart, and prevail with him to be willing to show us mercy; but suitably to affect our own hearts with the things we express, and so to prepare us for receiving the blessings we ask. And such gestures, and external behaviour in the worship of God, which custom has made to be significations of humility and reverence, can be of no further use, than as they have some tendency to affect our own hearts, or the hearts of others.

And the duty of singing praises to God, seems to be appointed wholly to excite and express religious affections. No other reason can be assigned, why we should express ourselves to God in verse, rather than in prose, and do it with music, but only that such is our nature and frame, that these things have a tendency to move our affections.

The same thing appears in the nature and design of the sacraments which God hath appointed. God, considering our frame, hath not only appointed that we should be told of the great things of the gospel,

and of the redemption of Christ, and instructed in them by his word; but also, that they should be, as it were, exhibited to our view, in sensible representations, in the sacraments, the more to affect us with them.

And the impressing of divine things on the hearts and affections of men, is evidently one great and main end for which God has ordained, that his word, delivered in the holy Scriptures, should be opened, applied, and set home upon men, in preaching. And therefore it does not answer the design which God had in his institution, merely for men to have good commentaries and expositions on the Scripture, and other good books of divinity; because, although these may tend, as well as preaching, to give men a good doctrinal, or speculative, understanding of the things of the word of God, yet they have not an equal tendency to impress them on men's hearts and affections. God hath appointed a particular and lively application of his word to men, in the preaching of it, as a fit means to affect sinners with the importance of the things of religion, and their own misery and necessity of a remedy, and the glory and sufficiency of the remedy provided; and to stir up the pure minds of the saints, and quicken their affections, by often bringing the great things of religion to their remembrance, and setting them before them in their proper colours, "though they know them, and have been fully instructed in them already." And particularly, to promote those two affections in them which are spoken of in the text, love and joy: "Christ gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; that the body of

Christ might be edified in love." The apostle, in instructing and counselling Timothy concerning the work of the ministry, informs him, that the great end of that word which a minister is to preach, is love and charity. And another affection which God has appointed preaching as a means to promote in the saints, is joy; and therefore ministers are called "helpers of their joy."

10. It is an evidence that true religion, or holiness of heart, lies very much in the affection of the heart, that the Scriptures place the sin of the heart very much in hardness of heart. This the Scriptures do every where. It was hardness of heart which excited grief and displeasure in Chirst towards the Jews: "He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." It is from men's having such a heart as this, that they treasure up wrath for themselves: "After thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." The reason given why the house of Israel would not obey God, was, that they were hard-hearted: "But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted." The wickedness of that perverse rebellious generation in the wilderness, is ascribed to the hardness of their hearts: "To-day, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness; when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work: forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err

in their heart," &c. This is spoken of as what prevented Zedekiah's turning to the Lord: "He stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning to the Lord God of Israel." This principle is spoken of as that from whence men are without the fear of God, and depart from God's ways: "O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways; and hardened our heart from thy fear?" And men's rejecting Christ, and opposing Christianity, is laid to this principle: "But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude." God's leaving men to the power of the sin and corruption of the heart, is often expressed by God's hardening their hearts: "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will, he hardeneth." "He hath blinded their minds, and hardened their hearts." And the apostle seems to speak of an evil heart, that departs from the living God, and a hard heart, as the same thing: "Harden not your heart, as in the provocation," &c. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God: but exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." And that great work of God in conversion, which consists in delivering a person from the powers of sin, and mortifying corruption, is expressed, once and again, by God's taking away the heart of stone, and giving a heart of flesh.

Now, by a hard heart, is plainly meant an unaffected heart, or a heart not easy to be moved with virtuous affections, like a stone, insensible, stupid, unmoved, and hard to be impressed. Hence the

hard heart is called a stony heart, and is opposed to a heart of flesh, that has feeling, and is sensibly touched and moved. We read in Scripture of a hard heart, and a tender heart: and doubtless we are to understand these, as contrary the one to the other. But what is a tender heart, but a heart which is easily impressed with what ought to affect it? God commends Josiah, because his heart was tender: and it is evident, by those things which are mentioned as expressions and evidences of this tenderness of heart, that by his heart being tender, is meant, his heart being easily moved with religious and pious affections: "Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me: I also have heard thee, saith the Lord." And this is one thing, wherein it is necessary we should become as little children, in order to our entering into the kingdom of God, even that we should have our hearts tender, and easily affected and moved in spiritual and divine things, as little children have in other things.

It is very plain, in some of the texts themselves, that by hardness of heart, is meant a heart void of affection. So, to signify the ostrich's being without natural affection to her young, it is said, "She hardeneth her heart against her young ones, as though they were not hers." So a person having a heart unaffected in time of danger, is expressed by his hardening his heart—"Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief."

Now, since it is so plain, that by a hard heart in Scripture, is meant a heart destitute of pious affections; and also, since the Scriptures so frequently place the sin and corruption of the heart in hardness of heart; it is evident, that the grace and holiness of the heart, on the contrary, must in a great measure consist in its having pious affections, and being easily susceptive of such affection. Divines are generally agreed, that sin radically and fundamentally consists in what is negative, or privative, having its root and foundation in a privation or want of holiness. And undoubtedly, if it be so that sin does very much consist in hardness of heart, and so in the want of pious affections of heart, holiness does consist very much in those pious affections.

I am far from supposing that all affections do show a tender heart: hatred, anger, vain-glory, and other selfish and self-exalting affections, may greatly prevail in the hardest heart. But yet it is evident, that hardness of heart, and tenderness of heart, are expressions that relate to the affections of the heart, and denote the heart's being susceptible of, or shut up against, certain affections; of which I shall have occasion to speak more afterwards.

Upon the whole, I think it clearly and abundantly evident, that true religion lies very much in the affections. Not that I think these arguments prove, that religion in the hearts of the truly godly, is ever in exact proportion to the degree of affection, and present emotion of the mind; for undoubtedly there is much affection in the true saints which is not spiritual; their religious affections are often mixed: all is not from grace, but much from nature. And

though the affections have not their seat in the body, yet the constitution of the body may very much contribute to the present emotion of the mind. And the degree of religion is rather to be judged of by the fixedness and strength of the habit that is exercised in affection, whereby holy affection is habitual, than by the degree of the present exercise; and the strength of that habit is not always in proportion to outward effects and manifestations, or inward effects, in the hurry and vehemence, and sudden changes of the course of the thoughts of the mind. But yet it is evident, that religion consists so much in affection, as that without holy affection there is no true religion; and no light in the understanding is good, which does not produce holy affection in the heart; no habit or principle in the heart is good, which has no such exercise; and no external fruit is good, which does not proceed from such exercises.

CHAPTER III.

Some inferences deduced from the proposition laid down.

1. We may hence learn how great their error is, who are for discarding all religious affections, as having nothing solid or substantial in them.

There seems to be too much of a disposition this way prevailing in this land at this time. Because many who, in the late extraordinary season, appeared to have great religious affections, did not manifest a

right temper of mind, and ran into many errors, in the time of their affection, and the heat of their zeal; and because the high affections of so many seem to be so soon come to nothing, and some who seemed to be mightily raised and swallowed up with joy and zeal for a while, seemed to have returned like the dog to his vomit: hence religious affections in general are grown out of credit with great numbers, as though true religion did not at all consist in them. Thus we easily and naturally run from one extreme to another. A little while ago we were in the other extreme: there was a prevalent disposition to look upon all high religious affections as eminent exercises of true grace, without much inquiring into the nature and source of those affections, and the manner in which they arose: if persons did but appear to be indeed very much moved and raised, so as to be full of religious talk, and express themselves with great warmth and earnestness, and to be filled, or to be very full, as the phrases were; it was too much the manner, without further examination, to conclude such persons were full of the Spirit of God, and had eminent experience of his gracious influences. This was the extreme which was prevailing three or four years ago. But of late, instead of esteeming and admiring all religious affections without distinction, it is a thing much more prevalent to reject and discard all without distinction. Herein appears the subtlety of Satan. While he saw that affections were much in vogue, knowing the greater part of the land were not versed in such things, and had not had much experience of great religious affections, to enable them to judge well of them, and distinguish between true and

false; then he knew he could best play his game, by sowing tares amongst the wheat, and mingling false affections with the works of God's Spirit: he knew this to be a likely way to delude and eternally ruin many souls, and greatly to wound religion in the saints, and entangle them in a dreadful wilderness, and by and by to bring all religion into disrepute. But now, when the ill consequences of these false affections appear, and it is become very apparent, that some of those emotions, which made a glaring show, and were by many greatly admired, were in reality nothing; the devil sees it to be for his interest to go another way to work, and to endeavour to his utmost to propagate and establish a persuasion, that all affections and sensible emotions of the mind, in things of religion, are nothing at all to be regarded, but are rather to be avoided, and carefully guarded against, as things of a pernicious tendency. This he knows is the way to bring all religion to a mere lifeless formality, and effectually shut out the power of godliness, and every thing which is spiritual, and to have all true Christianity turned out of doors. For although to true religion there must indeed be something else besides affection; yet true religion consists so much in the affections, that there can be no true religion without them. He who has no religious affection, is in a state of spiritual death, and is wholly destitute of the powerful, quickening, saving influences of the Spirit of God upon his heart. As there is no true religion where there is nothing else but affection, so there is no true religion where there is no religious affection. As, on the one hand, there must be light in the understanding, as well as an af-

fected fervent heart; where there is heat without light, there can be nothing divine or heavenly in that heart: so, on the other hand, where there is a kind of light without heat, a head stored with notions and speculations, with a cold and unaffected heart, there can be nothing divine in that light, that knowledge is no true spiritual knowledge of divine things. If the great things of religion are rightly understood, they will affect the heart. The reason why men are not affected by such infinitely great, important, glorious, and wonderful things, as they often hear and read of in the word of God, is undoubtedly because they are blind; if they were not so, it would be impossible, and utterly inconsistent with human nature, that their hearts should be otherwise than strongly impressed, and greatly moved by such things.

This manner of slighting all religious affections, is the way exceedingly to harden the hearts of men, to encourage them in their stupidity and senselessness, to keep them in a state of spiritual death as long as they live, and bring them at last to death eternal. The prevailing prejudice against religious affections at this day in the land, is apparently of awful effect to harden the hearts of sinners, and damp the graces of many of the saints, and stun the life and power of religion, and preclude the effect of ordinances, and hold us down in a state of dulness and apathy, and undoubtedly causes many persons greatly to offend God, in entertaining mean and low thoughts of the extraordinary work he has lately wrought in this land.

And for persons to despise and cry down all religious affections, is the way to shut all religion out

of their own hearts, and to make thorough work in ruining their souls.

They who condemn high affections in others, are certainly not likely to have high affections themselves. And let it be considered, that they who have but little religious affection, have certainly but little religion. And they who condemn others for their religious affections, and have none themselves, have no religion.

There are false affections, and there are true. A man's having much affection, does not prove that he has any true religion: but if he has no affection, it proves that he has no true religion. The right way, is neither to reject all affections, nor to approve all; but to distinguish between affections, approving some, and rejecting others; separating between the wheat and the chaff, the gold and the dross, the precious and the vile.

2. If it be so, that true religion lies much in the affections, hence we may infer, that such means are to be desired as have a strong tendency to move the affections. Such books, and such a way of preaching the word, and administration of ordinances, and such a way of worshipping God in prayer, and singing praises, is much to be desired, as having a tendency deeply to affect the hearts of those who attend these means.

Such means would formerly have been highly approved of, and applauded by the generality of the people of the land, as the most excellent and profitable, and as having the greatest tendency to promote the ends of the means of grace. But the prevailing taste seems of late to be strangely altered: that pathetical manner of praying and preaching, which would for-

merly have been admired and extolled, and that for this reason, because it had such a tendency to move the affections, now, in great multitudes, immediately excites disgust, and moves no other affections than those of displeasure and contempt.

Perhaps, formerly, the generality (at least of the common people) were in the extreme, of looking too much to an affectionate address in public performances; but now, a very great part of the people seem to have gone far into a contrary extreme. Indeed there may be such means, as may have a great tendency to stir up the passions of weak and ignorant persons, and yet have no great tendency to benefit their souls; for though they may have a tendency to excite affections, they may have little or none to excite gracious affections, or any affections tending to grace. But, undoubtedly, if the things of religion are treated according to their nature, and exhibited truly, so as to convey just apprehensions, and a right judgment of them; the more they have a tendency to move the affections, the better.

3. If true religion lies much in the affections, we may learn from hence, what great cause we have to be ashamed and confounded before God, that we are not more affected with the great things of religion. It appears from what has been said, that this arises from our having so little true religion.

God has given to mankind affections, for the same purpose for which he has given all the faculties and principles of the human soul; namely, that they might be subservient to man's chief end, and the great business for which God has created him, that is, the business of religion. And yet, how common is it for

mankind, to have their affections much more exercised and engaged in other matters, than in religion! In things which concern men's worldly interest, their outward delights, their honour and reputation, and their natural relations, they have their desires eager, their appetites vehement, their love warm and affectionate, their zeal ardent; in these things their hearts are tender and sensible, easily moved, deeply impressed, much concerned, very sensibly affected, and greatly engaged; much depressed with grief at worldly losses, and highly raised with joy at worldly successes and prosperity. But how insensible and unmoved are most men about the great things of another world! how dull are their affections! how heavy and hard their hearts in these matters! Here their love is cold, their desires languid, their zeal low, and their gratitude small. How they can sit and hear of the infinite height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of God in Christ Jesus; of his giving his infinitely dear Son to be offered up a sacrifice for the sins of men; and of the unparalleled love of the innocent, holy, and tender Lamb of God, manifested in his dying agonies, his bloody sweat, his loud and bitter cries, and bleeding heart; and all this for enemies, to redeem them from deserved, eternal burnings, and to bring them to unspeakable and everlasting joy and glory;—and yet be cold and heavy, insensible and regardless! Where are the exercises of our affections proper, if not here? what is it that more requires them? and what can be a fit occasion of their lively and vigorous exercise, if not such a one as this? Can any thing be set in our view greater and more important? any thing more won-

derful and surprising? or more nearly concerning our interest? Can we suppose that the wise Creator implanted such principles in the human nature as the affections, to be of no use to us, and to be exercised on certain proper occasions, but to lie still on such an occasion as this? Can any Christian, who believes the truth of these things, entertain such thoughts?

If we ought ever to exercise our affections at all, and if the Creator has not unwisely constituted the human nature, in making these principles a part of it, when they are vain and useless, then they ought to be exercised about those objects which are most worthy of them.

But is there any thing which Christians can find in heaven or earth, so worthy to be the objects of their admiration and love, their earnest and longing desires, their hope and their rejoicing, and their fervent zeal, as those things that are held forth to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ? in which not only are things declared most worthy to affect us, but they are exhibited in the most affecting manner. The glory and beauty of the blessed Jehovah, which is most worthy in itself to be the object of our admiration and love, is there exhibited in the most affecting manner that can be conceived of, as it appears shining in all its lustre, in the face of an incarnate, infinitely-loving, meek, compassionate, dying Redeemer. All the virtues of the Lamb of God, his humility, patience, meekness, submission, obedience, love, and compassion, are exhibited to our view, in a manner the most tending to move our affections of any that can be imagined; as they all had their greatest trial, and their highest exercise, and so their brightest

manifestation, when he was in the most affecting circumstances; even when he was under his last sufferings, those unutterable and unparalleled sufferings he endured from his tender love and pity to us. There also, the hateful nature of our sins is manifested in the most affecting manner possible; as we see the dreadful effects of them, in what our Redeemer, who undertook to answer for us, suffered for them. And there we have the most affecting manifestations of God's hatred to sin, and his wrath and justice in punishing it; as we see his justice in its strictness and inflexibleness, and his wrath in its terribleness, in so dreadfully punishing our sins, in one who was infinitely dear to him, and loving to us. So has God disposed things in the work of our redemption, and in his glorious dispensations, revealed to us in the gospel, as though every thing were purposely contrived to have the greatest possible tendency to reach our hearts in the most tender part, and move our affections most sensibly and strongly. How great cause have we, therefore, to be humbled to the dust, that we are not more affected.

PART II.

SHOWING WHAT ARE NO CERTAIN SIGNS THAT RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS ARE TRULY GRACIOUS, OR THAT THEY ARE NOT.

A

TREATISE

CONCERNING

RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS.

PART II.

SHOWING WHAT ARE NO CERTAIN SIGNS THAT RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS ARE TRULY GRACIOUS, OR THAT THEY ARE NOT.

If any one, on reading what has just now been stated, is ready to acquit himself, and say—"I am not one of those who have no religious affections; I am often greatly moved with the consideration of the great things of religion,"—let him not content himself with this, that he has religious affections: for, as we observed before, as we ought not to reject and condemn all affections, as though true religion did not at all consist in affection; so, on the other hand, we ought not to approve of all, as though every one that was religiously affected had true grace, and was therein the subject of the saving influences of the Spirit of God: and that therefore the right way is to distinguish between one sort and another of religious affections. That we may be guarded against judging of affections by false signs, I shall, in the first place, show what are no certain signs that affections are truly gracious, or that they are not.

CHAPTER I.

It is no sign, one way or the other, that Religious Affections are very great, or raised very high.

SOME are ready to condemn all high affections: if persons appear to have their religious affections raised to an extraordinary pitch, they are prejudiced against them, and determine that they are delusions, without further inquiry. But if, as has been proved, true religion lies very much in religious affections, then it follows, that if there be a great deal of true religion, there will be great religious affections; if true religion in the hearts of men be raised to a great height, divine and holy affections will also be raised to a great height.

Love is an affection: but will any Christian say, men ought not to love God and Jesus Christ in a high degree? and will any say, we ought not to have a very great hatred of sin, and a very deep sorrow for it? or that we ought not to exercise a high degree of gratitude to God, for the mercies we receive of him, and the great things he has done for the salvation of fallen men? or that we should not have very great and strong desires after God and holiness? Is there any who will profess, that his affections in religion are great enough; and will say, "I have no cause to be humbled, that I am not more affected with the things of religion than I am; I have no reason to be ashamed, that I have no greater exercises of love to God, and sorrow for sin, and gratitude for the

mercies which I have received ?" Who is there that will go and bless God, that he is affected enough with what he has read and heard of the wonderful love of God to worms and rebels, in giving his only-begotten Son to die for them, and of the dying love of Christ; and will pray that he may not be affected with them in any higher degree, because high affections are improper, and very unlovely in Christians, being enthusiastical and ruinous to true religion?

Our text plainly speaks of great and high affections, when it speaks of "rejoicing with joy unspeakable, and full of glory:" here the most superlative expressions are used which language will afford. And the Scriptures often require us to exercise very high affections: thus, in the first and great commandment of the law, there is an accumulation of expressions, as though words were wanting to express the degree in which we ought to love God: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." —So the saints are called upon to exercise high degrees of joy: "Rejoice," says Christ to his disciples, "and be exceeding glad." It is said, "Let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God; yea, let them exceedingly rejoice." In the book of Psalms, the saints are often called upon to shout for joy; and in Luke vi. 23. to leap for joy. So they are abundantly called upon to exercise high degrees of gratitude for mercies, to "praise God with all their hearts, with hearts lifted up in the ways of the Lord, and their souls magnifying the Lord, singing his praises, talking of his wondrous works, declaring his doings," &c.

And we find the most eminent saints in Scripture often professing high affections. Thus the Psalmist speaks of his love, as if it were unspeakable: "O how love I thy law!" So he expresses a great degree of hatred of sin: "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred." He also expresses a high degree of sorrow for sin: he speaks of his sins "going over his head, as a heavy burden, that was too heavy for him; and of his roaring all the day, and his moisture being turned into the drought of summer," and his bones being as it were broken with sorrow. So he often expresses great degrees of spiritual desires, in a multitude of the strongest expressions which can be conceived of; such as, "his longing, his soul's thirsting as a dry and thirsty land where no water is, his panting, his flesh and heart crying out, his soul breaking for the longing it hath," &c. He expresses the exercises of great and extreme grief for the sins of others: "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law." "Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law." He expresses high exercises of joy: "The king shall joy in thy strength, and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!" "My lips shall greatly rejoice, when I sing unto thee." "Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips; when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the

night-watches. Because thou hast been my help; therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice."

The apostle Paul expresses high exercises of affection. Thus he expresses the exercises of pity and concern for others' good, even to anguish of heart; a great, fervent, and abundant love, and earnest and longing desires, and exceeding joy; and speaks of the exultation and triumphs of his soul, and his earnest expectation and hope, and his abundant tears, and the travails of his soul, in pity, grief, earnest desires, godly jealousy, and fervent zeal, in many places that have been cited already, and which therefore I need not repeat. John the Baptist expressed great joy. Those blessed women that anointed the body of Jesus, are represented as in a very high exercise of religious affection, on occasion of Christ's resurrection: "And they departed from the sepulchre, with fear and great joy."

It is often foretold of the church of God, in her future happy seasons here on earth, that they shall exceedingly rejoice: "They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh," &c. The same is represented in many other places. And because high degrees of joy are the proper and genuine fruits of the gospel of Christ, therefore the angel calls this gospel, "good tidings of great joy, that should be to all people."

The saints and angels in heaven, that have religion in its highest perfection, are exceedingly affected with what they behold and contemplate of God's perfec-

tions and works. They are all as a pure heavenly flame of fire, in their love, and in the greatness and strength of their joy and gratitude: their praises are represented "as the noise of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder." Now, the only reason why their affections are so much higher than the holy affections of saints on earth is, they see the things by which they are affected, more according to their truth, and have their affections more conformed to the nature of things. And, therefore, if religious affections in men here below, are but of the same nature and kind with theirs, the higher they are, and the nearer they are to theirs in degree, the better; because therein they will be so much the more conformed to truth, as theirs are.

From these things it certainly appears, that religious affections being in a very high degree, is no evidence that they are not such as have the nature of true religion. Therefore they do greatly err, who condemn persons as enthusiasts, merely because their affections are very high.

And, on the other hand, it is no evidence that religious affections are of a spiritual and gracious nature, because they are great. It is very manifest by the holy Scripture, our sure and infallible rule to judge of things of this nature, that there are religious affections which are very high, that are not spiritual and saving. The apostle Paul speaks of affections in the Galatians, which had been exceedingly elevated, and of which yet he manifestly speaks, as fearing they were vain, and had come to nothing—"Where is the blessedness you spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, you would have

plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me." And he tells them, " he was afraid of them, lest he had bestowed upon them labour in vain." The children of Israel were greatly affected with God's mercy to them, when they had seen how wonderfully he wrought for them at the Red Sea, where they sang God's praise, though they soon forgat his works. They were greatly affected again at Mount Sinai, when they saw the marvellous manifestations God made of himself there: and, when God proposed his holy covenant to them, with great forwardness made answer, saying, " All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient." But how soon was there an end to all this mighty forwardness and engagedness of affection! how quickly were they turned aside after other gods, rejoicing and shouting around their golden calf! So great multitudes, who were affected with the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead, were elevated to a high degree, and made a mighty ado, when Jesus presently after entered into Jerusalem, exceedingly magnifying Christ, as though the ground were not good enough for the ass he rode to tread upon; and therefore cut down branches of palm-trees, and strewed them in the way; yea, pulled off their garments, and spread them in the way; and cried with loud voices, " Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." We learn, by the evangelist John, that the reason why the people made this ado, was because they were affected with the miracle of raising Lazarus. Here was a vast multitude crying Hosanna on this occasion, so that it gave occasion to the Pharisees to say, " Behold the world

is gone after him;"—but Christ had at that time but few true disciples. And how quickly was this ado at an end!—all this is quelled and dead, when this same Jesus stands bound, with a mock robe and a crown of thorns, to be derided, spit upon, scourged, condemned, and executed. Indeed there was a great and loud outcry concerning him, among the multitude then, as well as before; but of a very different kind: it is not then, Hosanna, Hosanna, but Crucify, Crucify!

And it is the concurring voice of all orthodox divines, that there may be religious affections,* which are raised to a very high degree, and yet have nothing of true religion.

CHAPTER II.

It is no sign that Affections have the nature of true Religion, or that they have not, that they have great effects on the Body.

All affections whatsoever, have, in some respect or degree, an effect on the body. Such is our nature, and such are the laws of union of soul and body, that the mind can have no lively or vigorous exercise, without some effect upon the body. So subject is the body to the mind, and so much do its fluids, especially the animal spirits, attend the motions and exercises of the mind, that there cannot be so much

* Mr. Stoddard observes, "That common affections are sometimes stronger than saving."—*Guide to Christ*, p. 21.

as an intense thought, without an effect upon them. Yea, it is questionable, whether an imbodied soul ever so much as thinks one thought, or has any exercise at all, but there is some corresponding motion, or alteration of motion, of the fluids, in some part of the body. But universal experience shows, that the exercise of the affections have, in a special manner, a tendency to produce some sensible effect upon the body. And if all affections have some effect on the body, we may well suppose, the greater those affections are, and the more vigorous their exercise, (other circumstances being equal,) the greater will be the effect on the body. Hence it is not to be wondered at, that very great and strong exercises of the affections should have great effects on the body. And, therefore, since there are very great affections, both common and spiritual, it is not to be wondered at, that great effects on the body should arise from both these kinds of affections. And, consequently, these effects are no signs that the affections from which they arise are of one kind or the other.

Great effects on the body are no sure evidences that affections are spiritual; for we see that such effects often arise from great affections about temporal things, in which religion is no way concerned. And if great affections about secular things, that are purely natural, have these effects, I know not by what rule we should determine, that high affections about religious things, which arise in like manner from nature, cannot have the like effect.

Nor, on the other hand, do I know of any rule they have to determine, that gracious and holy affections, when raised as high as any natural affections,

and have equally strong and vigorous exercises, cannot have a great effect on the body. No such rule can be drawn from reason: I know no reason why being affected with a view of God's glory should not cause the body to faint, as well as being affected with a view of Solomon's glory. No such rule has been produced from the Scripture; and none has ever been found, in all the late controversies which have been about things of this nature. There is a great power in spiritual affections: we read of the power which worketh in Christians,* and of the Spirit of God being in them, as the Spirit of power,† and of the effectual working of his power in them,‡ yea, of the working of God's mighty power in them.§ But man's nature is weak: flesh and blood are represented in Scripture as exceedingly weak, and particularly with respect to its unfitness for great spiritual and heavenly operations and exercises. The text speaks of "joy unspeakable, and full of glory." And who that considers what man's nature is, and what the nature of the affections are, can reasonably doubt but that such unutterable and glorious joys may be too great and mighty for weak dust and ashes, so as considerably to overbear it? It is evident by the Scripture, that true divine discoveries, or ideas of God's glory, when given in a great degree, have a tendency, by affecting the mind, to overbear the body; because the Scripture often teaches us, that if these ideas or views should be given to such a degree as they are given in heaven, the weak frame of the body could not subsist under it, and that no man can, in that man-

* Eph. iii. 7. † 2 Tim. i. 7. ‡ Eph. iii. 7, 20. § Eph. i. 19.

ner, see God and live. The knowledge which the saints have of God's beauty and glory in this world, and those holy affections that arise from it, are of the same nature and kind which the saints possess in heaven, differing only in degree and circumstances: what God gives them here, is a foretaste of heavenly happiness, and an earnest of their future inheritance. And who shall limit God in his giving this earnest, or say he shall give so much of the inheritance, such a part, and no more, of the future reward, as an earnest of the whole? And seeing God has taught us in his word, that the whole reward is such, that it would at once destroy the body, is it not too bold a thing for us, so to set bounds to the Sovereign God, as to say, that in giving the earnest of this reward in this world, he shall never give so much of it, as in the least to diminish the strength of the body, when God has nowhere thus limited himself?

The Psalmist, speaking of vehement religious affections which he had, speaks of an effect in his flesh or body, besides what was in his soul, expressly distinguishing one from the other: "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." Here is a plain distinction between the heart and the flesh, as being each affected: "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." Here also is an evident distinction between the soul and the flesh.

The prophet Habakkuk speaks of his body being overborne by a sense of the majesty of God: "When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I

trembled in myself." So the Psalmist speaks expressly of his flesh trembling: "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee."

That such ideas of God's glory as are sometimes given in this world, have a tendency to overbear the body, is evident, because the Scripture gives us an account, that this has sometimes actually been the effect of those external manifestations God has made of himself, to some of the saints, which were made to that end, namely, to give them an idea of God's majesty and glory. Such instances we have in the prophet Daniel, and the apostle John. Daniel, giving an account of an external representation of the glory of Christ, says, "And there remained no strength in me; for my comeliness was turned into corruption, and I retained no strength." And the apostle John, giving an account of a like manifestation made to him, says, "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." It is in vain to say here, these were only external manifestations, or symbols of the glory of Christ, which these saints beheld: for though it be true, that they were outward representations of Christ's glory, which they beheld with their bodily eyes; yet the end and use of these external symbols or representations, was to give to these prophets an idea of the thing represented, and that was the true divine glory and majesty of Christ, which is his spiritual glory; they were made use of only as significations of his spiritual glory, and thus undoubtedly they received them, and improved them, and were affected by them. According to the end for which God intended these outward signs, they received by them a great and lively apprehension of the

real glory and majesty of God's nature, of which they were signs; and thus were greatly affected, their souls swallowed up, and their bodies overborne. And I think they are very bold and daring, who will say, God cannot, or shall not, give the like clear and affecting ideas and apprehensions of the same real glory and majesty of his nature, to none of his saints, without the intervention of any such external shadows of it.

Before I leave this head, I would farther observe, that it is plain the Scripture often makes use of bodily effects, to express the strength of holy and spiritual affections; such as trembling,* groaning,† being sick,‡ crying out,§ panting,‖ and fainting.¶ Now, if it be supposed, that these are only figurative expressions, to represent the degree of affection; yet I hope all will allow, that they are fit and suitable figures to represent the high degree of those spiritual affections, which the Spirit of God makes use of them to represent: which I do not see how they would be, if those spiritual affections, let them be in ever so high a degree, have no tendency to any such things; but that, on the contrary, they are the proper effects, and sad tokens of false affections, and the delusion of the devil. I cannot think, God would commonly make use of things which are very alien from spiritual affections, and are shrewd marks of the hand of Satan, and smell strong of the bottomless pit, as beautiful figures, to represent the high degree of holy and heavenly affections.

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* Psalm cxix. 120. Ezra ix. 4. Isa. lxvi. 2, 5. Hab. iii. 16. ——† Rom. viii. 26.——‡ Cant. ii. 5. and v. 8.——§ Psalm lxxxiv. 2.——‖ Psalm xxxviii. 10. xlii. 1. and cxix. 131.——¶ Psalm lxxxiv. 2. and cxix. 81.

CHAPTER III.

It is no sign that Affections are truly gracious, or that they are not, that they cause those who have them to be fluent, fervent, and abundant, in talking of the things of Religion.

THERE are many persons, who, if they see this in others, are greatly prejudiced against them. Their being so full of talk, is with them a sufficient ground to condemn them, as Pharisees, and ostentatious hypocrites. On the other hand, there are many, who, if they see this effect in any, very ignorantly and imprudently determine that they are the true children of God, and are under the saving influences of his Spirit, and speak of it as a great evidence of a new creature: they say, "Such a one's mouth is now opened; he used to be slow to speak, but now he is full and free: he is free now to open his heart, and tell his experiences, and declare the praises of God; it comes from him, as free as water from a fountain." And especially are they captivated into a confident and undoubting persuasion that they are savingly wrought upon, if they are not only free and abundant, but very affectionate and earnest in their talk.

But this is the fruit of little judgment, a scanty and short experience; as events abundantly show: and it is a mistake into which persons often run, through their trusting to their own wisdom and discerning, and making their own notions their rule, instead of the holy Scripture. Though the Scripture

be full of rules, both how we should judge of our own state, and how we should be conducted in our opinion of others; yet we have nowhere any rule, by which to judge ourselves or others to be in a good estate, from any such effect: for this is but the religion of the mouth and of the tongue, and what is in the Scripture represented by the leaves of a tree, which, though the tree ought not to be without them, yet are nowhere given as an evidence of the goodness of the tree.

That persons are disposed to be abundant in talking of things of religion, may be from a good cause, and it may be from a bad one. It may be because their hearts are very full of holy affections; for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;" and it may be because their hearts are very full of religious affection which is not holy; for still "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." It is very much the nature of the affections, of whatever kind they be, and about whatever objects they are exercised, if they are strong, to dispose persons to speak much of that with which they are affected; and not only to speak much, but to speak very earnestly and fervently. And therefore persons talking abundantly and very fervently about the things of religion, can be an evidence of no more than this, that they are very much affected with the things of religion: but this may be, (as has been already shown,) and there be no grace. That with which men are greatly affected, while the high affection lasts, they will be earnestly engaged about, and will be likely to show that earnestness in their talk and behaviour; as the greater part of the Jews, in all

Judea and Galilee, did for a while, about John the Baptist's preaching and baptism, when they were willing for a season to rejoice in his light: a mighty ado was made all over the land, and among all sorts of persons, about this great prophet and his ministry. And so the multitude, in like manner, often manifested a great earnestness, a mighty engagedness of spirit, in every thing that was external, about Christ and his preaching and miracles, being astonished at his doctrine, anon with joy receiving the word, following him sometimes night and day, leaving meat, drink, and sleep, to hear him; once following him into the wilderness, fasting three days to hear him; sometimes crying him up to the clouds, saying, "Never man spake like this man!" being fervent and earnest in what they said. But what did these things come to in the greater part of them?

A person may be over-full of talk of his own experiences; commonly falling upon it, every where, and in all companies: and when it is so, it is rather a dark sign than a good one. As a tree that is over-full of leaves seldom bears much fruit; and as a cloud, though to appearance very pregnant and full of water, if it brings with it over-much wind, seldom affords much rain to the dry and thirsty earth: which very thing the Holy Spirit is pleased several times to make use of, to represent a great show of religion with the mouth, without answerable fruit in the life: "Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift, is like clouds and wind without rain." And the apostle Jude, speaking of some in the primitive times, that crept in unawares among the saints, and having a great show of religion, were for a while not sus-

pected: "These are clouds without water, carried about of winds." And the apostle Peter, speaking of the same, says, "These are clouds without water, carried with a tempest."

False affections, if they are equally strong, are much more forward to declare themselves, than true: because it is the nature of false religion, to affect show and observation; as it was with the Pharisees.*

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* That famous experimental divine, Mr. Shepard, says, "A Pharisee's trumpet shall be heard to the town's end; when simplicity walks through the town unseen. Hence a man will sometimes covertly commend himself, (and *myself* ever comes in,) and tells you a long story of conversion; and an hundred to one if some lie or other slip not out with it. Why, the secret meaning is—I pray admire me. Hence complain of wants and weaknesses—Pray think what a broken-hearted Christian I am."—*Parable of the Ten Virgins*, Part I. page 179, 180.

And holy Mr. Flavel says thus—"O reader, if thy heart were right with God, and thou didst not cheat thyself with a vain profession, thou wouldst have frequent business with God, which thou wouldst be loath thy dearest friend, or the wife of thy bosom, should be privy to. *Non est religio, ubi omnia patent.* Religion doth not lie open to all, to the eyes of men. Observed duties maintain our credit; but secret duties maintain our life. It was the saying of a heathen, about his secret correspondency with his friend, 'What need the world be acquainted with it? Thou and I are theatre enough to each other.' There are inclosed pleasures in religion, which none but renewed spiritual souls do feelingly understand."—*Flavel's Touchstone of Sincerity*, Chap. II. Sect. 2.

CHAPTER IV.

It is no sign that Affections are gracious, or that they are otherwise, that persons did not excite them of their own contrivance, and by their own strength.

THERE are many in these days, that condemn all affections which are excited in a way of which the subjects of them can give no account, as not seeming to be the fruit of any of their own endeavours, or the natural consequence of the faculties and principles of human nature, in such circumstances, and under such means; but to be from the influence of some extrinsic and supernatural power upon their minds. How greatly has the doctrine of the inward experience, or sensible perceiving of the immediate power and operation of the Spirit of God, been reproached and ridiculed by many of late? They say, the manner of the Spirit of God is to co-operate in a silent, secret, and undiscernible way, with the use of means, and our own endeavours; so that there is no distinguishing by sense, between the influences of the Spirit of God, and the natural operations of the faculties of our own minds.

And it is true, that for any to expect to receive the saving influences of the Spirit of God, while they neglect a diligent improvement of the appointed means of grace, is unreasonable presumption. And to expect that the Spirit of God will savingly operate upon their minds, without making use of means, as subservient to the effect, is enthusiastical. It is also

undoubtedly true, that the Spirit of God is very various in the manner and circumstances of his operations, and that sometimes he operates in a way more secret and gradual, and from smaller beginnings, than at others.

But if there be indeed a power, entirely different from and beyond our power, or the power of all means and instruments, and above the power of nature, which is requisite in order to the production of saving grace in the heart; then, certainly, it is not unreasonable to suppose, that this effect should very frequently be produced in such a manner, as to make it very manifest, apparent, and sensible that it is so. If grace be indeed owing to the powerful and efficacious operation of an extrinsic agent, or divine efficient, out of ourselves, why is it unreasonable to suppose it should seem to be so to them who are the subjects of it? Is it a strange thing, that it should seem to be as it is? When grace in the heart indeed is not produced by our strength, nor is the effect of the natural power of our own faculties, or any means or instruments, but is properly the workmanship and production of the Spirit of the Almighty, is it a strange and unaccountable thing, that it should seem, to them who are subjects of it, agreeable to truth; so that if persons tell of effects of which they are conscious in their own minds, that seem to them not to be from the natural power or operation of their minds, but from the supernatural power of some other agent, it should at once be looked upon as a sure evidence of their being under a delusion, because things seem to them to be as they are? For this is the objection which is made: it is looked upon as a clear evidence, that the

apprehensions and affections that many persons have, are not really from such a cause, because they seem to them to be from that cause: they declare that what they are conscious of, seems to them evidently not to be from themselves, but from the mighty power of the Spirit of God; and others from hence condemn them, and determine, that what they experience is not from the Spirit of God, but from themselves, or from the devil. Thus unreasonably are multitudes treated at this day by their neighbours.

If it be indeed so, as the Scripture abundantly teaches, that grace in the soul is so entirely the effect of God's power, that it is fitly compared to those effects which are farthest from being produced by any strength in the subject, such as a generation, a being begotten, a resurrection, a being raised from the dead, a creation, or a being brought out of nothing into being, and that it is an effect wherein the mighty power of God is greatly glorified, and the exceeding greatness of his power is manifested; then how can we account for it, that the Almighty, in so great a work of his power, should so carefully hide his power, that the subjects of it should be able to discern nothing of it? or what reason or revelation have any to determine that he does so? If we may judge by the Scripture, this is not agreeable to God's manner, in his operations and dispensations; but, on the contrary, it is God's manner, in the great works of his power and mercy which he works for his people, to order things so as to make his hand visible, and his power conspicuous, and men's dependence on him most evident, "that no flesh should glory in his presence" —"that God alone might be exalted"—that "the

excellency of the power might be of God, and not of man"—and "that Christ's power might be manifested in our weakness," and none might say, "Mine own hand hath saved me." So it was in most of those temporal salvations which God wrought for Israel of old, which were types of the salvation of God's people from their spiritual enemies. So it was in the redemption of Israel from their Egyptian bondage: he redeemed them with a strong hand, and an outstretched arm; and that his power might be the more conspicuous, he suffered Israel first to be brought into the most helpless and forlorn circumstances. So it was in the great redemption by Gideon: God would have his army diminished to a handful, and they without any other arms than trumpets, and lamps, and earthen pitchers. So it was in the deliverance of Israel from Goliath, by a stripling with a sling and a stone. So it was in that great work of God, his calling the Gentiles, and converting the heathen world, after Christ's ascension, after that the world by wisdom knew not God, and all the endeavours of philosophers had proved vain, for many ages, to reform the world, and it was become abundantly evident, that the world was utterly helpless, by any thing else but the mighty power of God. And so it was in most of the conversions of particular persons, of which we have an account in the history of the New Testament: they were not wrought on in that silent, secret, gradual, and insensible manner, which is now insisted on; but with those manifest evidences of a supernatural power, wonderfully and suddenly causing a great change, which in these days are looked upon as certain signs of delusion and enthusiasm.

The apostle speaks of God enlightening the minds of Christians, and so bringing them to believe in Christ, to the end that they might know the exceeding greatness of his power to them who believe. The words are, " The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power," &c. Now when the apostle speaks of their being thus the subjects of his power, in their enlightening and effectual calling, to the end that they might know what his mighty power was to them who believe, he can mean nothing else, than that they might know by experience. But if the saints know this power by experience, then they feel it, and discern it, and are conscious of it; as sensibly distinguishable from the natural operations of their own minds, which is agreeable to a notion of God's operating so secretly and undiscernibly, that it cannot be known that they are the subjects of the influence of any extrinsic power at all, any otherwise than as they may argue it from Scripture assertions; which is a different thing from knowing it by experience.

So that it is very unreasonable and unscriptural, to determine that affections are not from the gracious operations of God's Spirit, because they are sensibly not from the persons themselves that are the subjects of them.

On the other hand, it is no evidence that affections are gracious, that they are not purposely produced by those who are the subjects of them, or that they arise in their minds in a manner they cannot account for.

There are some who make this an argument in their own favour: when speaking of what they have experienced, they say, "I am sure I did not make it myself; it was a fruit of no contrivance or endeavour of mine; it came when I thought nothing of it; if I might have the world for it, I cannot make it again when I please." And hence they determine, very ignorantly, and without grounds, that what they have experienced must be from the mighty influence of the Spirit of God, and is of a saving nature. What they have been the subjects of, may indeed not be from themselves directly, but may be from the operation of an invisible agent, some spirit besides their own: but it does not thence follow, that it was from the Spirit of God. There are other spirits who have influence on the minds of men, besides the Holy Ghost. We are directed not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits, whether they be of God. There are many false spirits, exceedingly busy with men, who often transform themselves into angels of light, and do in many wonderful ways, with great subtilty and power, mimic the operations of the Spirit of God. And there are many of Satan's operations, which are very distinguishable from the voluntary exercises of men's own minds. They are so, in those dreadful and horrid suggestions, and blasphemous injections, with which he follows many persons; and in vain and fruitless frights and terrors, of which he is the author. And the power of Satan may be as immediate, and as evident in false comforts and joys, as in terrors and horrid suggestions; and, in fact, oftentimes is so. It is not in men's power to put themselves into such raptures, as the Anabaptists in

Germany, and many other raving enthusiasts like them, have been the subjects of.

And besides, it is to be considered, that persons may have those impressions on their minds, which may not be of their own producing, nor from an evil spirit, but from the Spirit of God, and yet not be from a saving, but from a common influence of the Spirit of God: and the subjects of such impressions may be of the number of those we read of, "that are once enlightened, and taste of the heavenly gift, and are made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and taste the good word of God, and the power of the world to come;" and yet may be wholly unacquainted with those "better things that accompany salvation."

And where neither a good nor evil spirit have any immediate hand, persons, especially such as are of a weak and vapoury habit of body, and the brain weak, and easily susceptive of impressions, may have strange apprehensions and imaginations, and strong affections attending them, arising unaccountably, which are not voluntarily produced by themselves. We see that such persons are liable to such impressions about temporal things; and there is equal reason why they should about spiritual things. As a person who is asleep has dreams of which he is not the voluntary author; so may such persons, in like manner, be the subjects of involuntary impressions when they are awake.

CHAPTER V.

It is no sign that Religious Affections are truly holy and spiritual, or that they are not, that they come with texts of Scripture, remarkably brought to the mind.

It is no sign that affections are not gracious, that they are occasioned by scriptures so coming to mind; provided it be the scripture itself, or the truth which the scripture so brought contains and teaches, that is the foundation of the affection, and not merely, or mainly, the sudden and unusual manner of its coming to the mind.

But, on the other hand, neither is it any sign that affections are gracious, that they arise on occasion of scriptures brought suddenly and wonderfully to the mind; whether those affections be fear or hope, joy or sorrow, or any other. Some seem to look upon this as a good evidence that their affections are saving, especially if the affections excited are hope or joy, or any other which are pleasing and delightful. They will mention it as an evidence that all is right, that their experience came with the word, and will say, "There were such and such sweet promises brought to my mind; they came suddenly, as if they were spoken to me: I had no hand in bringing such a text to my own mind: I was not thinking of any thing leading to it; it came all at once, so that I was surprised. I had not thought of it a long time before; I did not know at first that it was scripture:

I did not remember that ever I had read it." And it may be, they will add, "One scripture came flowing in after another, and texts all over the Bible, the most sweet and pleasant, and the most apt and suitable, which could be devised; and filled me full as I could hold: I could not but stand and admire: the tears flowed; I was full of joy, and could not doubt any longer." And thus they think they have undoubted evidence that their affections must be from God, and of the right kind, and their state good; but without any manner of grounds. How come they by any such rule, as that, if any affections or experiences arise with promises, and comfortable texts of Scripture, unaccountably brought to mind without their recollection, or if a great number of sweet texts follow one another in a chain, that this is a certain evidence their experiences are saving? Where is any such rule to be found in the Bible, the great and only sure directory in things of this nature?

What deceives many of the less intelligent and considerate sort of people in this matter, seems to be this,—that the Scripture is the word of God, and has nothing in it which is wrong, but is pure and perfect; and therefore, those experiences which come from the Scripture must be right. But then it should be considered, affections may arise on occasion of the Scripture, and not properly come from the Scripture, as its genuine fruit, and by a right use of it, but from an abuse of it. All that can be argued from the purity and perfection of the word of God, with respect to experiences, is this,—that those experiences which are agreeable to the word of God, are right, and cannot be otherwise; and not that those

affections must be right, which arise on occasion of the word of God coming to the mind.

What evidence is there, that the devil cannot bring texts of Scripture to the mind, and misapply them, to deceive persons? There seems to be nothing in this which exceeds the power of Satan. It is no work of such mighty power to bring sounds or letters to persons' minds, that we have any reason to suppose nothing short of Omnipotence can be sufficient for it. If Satan has power to bring any words or sounds at all to persons' minds, he may have power to bring words contained in the Bible. There is no higher kind of power required in men, to make the sounds which express the words of a text of Scripture, than to make the sounds which express the words of an idle story or song. And so the same power in Satan, which is sufficient to renew one of those kinds of sounds in the mind, is sufficient to renew the other: the different signification, which depends wholly on custom, alters not the case, as to ability to make or revive the sounds or letters. Or will any suppose, that texts of scripture are such sacred things, that the devil durst not abuse them, nor touch them? In this also, they are mistaken. He who was bold enough to lay hold on Christ himself, and carry him hither and thither, into the wilderness, and into a high mountain, and to a pinnacle of the temple, is not afraid to touch the Scripture, and abuse it for his own purposes; as he showed at the same time that he was so bold with Christ. He then brought one scripture and another, to deceive and tempt him. And if Satan did presume, and was permitted, to put Christ himself in mind of

texts of Scripture, to tempt him, what reason have we to determine that he dare not, or will not, be permitted to put wicked men in mind of texts of Scripture, to tempt and deceive *them?* And if Satan may thus abuse one text of Scripture, so he may another. Its being a very excellent place of Scripture, a comfortable and precious promise, alters not the case, as to his courage or ability. And if he can bring one comfortable text to the mind, so he may a thousand; and may choose out such scriptures as tend most to serve his purpose, and may heap up scripture promises, tending, according to the perverse application he makes of them, wonderfully to remove the rising doubts, and to confirm the false joy and confidence, of a poor deluded sinner.

We know the devil's instruments, corrupt and heretical teachers, can and do pervert the Scripture, to their own and others' damnation. We see they have the free use of Scripture, in every part of it: there is no text so precious and sacred, but they are permitted to abuse it, to the eternal ruin of multitudes of souls; and there are no weapons they make use of, with which they do more execution. And there is no reason to determine, that the devil is not permitted thus to use the Scripture, as well as his instruments. For when the latter do it, they do it as his instruments and servants, and through his instigation and influence; and doubtless he does the same he instigates others to do: the devil's servants do but follow their master, and do the same work that he does himself.

And as the devil can abuse the Scripture, to deceive and destroy men, so may men's own folly and

corruptions as well. The sin which is in men, acts like its father. Men's own hearts are deceitful like the devil, and use the same means to deceive.

So that it is evident, that persons may have high affections of hope and joy, arising on occasion of texts of Scripture, yea, precious promises of Scripture, coming suddenly and remarkably to their minds, as though they were spoken to them, yea, a great multitude of such texts, following one another in a wonderful manner, and yet all this be no argument that these affections are divine, or that they are any other than the effects of Satan's delusions.

And I would further observe, that persons may have raised and joyful affections, which may come *with* the word of God, and not only so, but *from* the word, and those affections not be from Satan, nor yet properly from the corruptions of their own hearts, but from some influence of the Spirit of God with the word, and yet have nothing of the nature of true and saving religion in them. Thus the stony-ground hearers had great joy from the word; yea, it is represented as arising from the word, as growth from a seed; and their affections had, in their appearance, a very great and exact resemblance with those represented by the growth on the good ground, the difference not appearing until it was discovered by the consequences in a time of trial,—and yet there was no saving religion in these affections.*

* Mr. Stoddard, in his *Guide to Christ*, speaks of it as a common thing, for persons, while in a natural condition, and before they have ever truly accepted of Christ, to have Scripture promises come to them, with a great deal of refreshing; which they take as tokens of God's love, and hope that God has accepted them; and so are confident of their good estate.— Pages 8, 9—Impression, *anno* 1735.

CHAPTER VI.

It is no evidence that Religious Affections are saving, or that they are otherwise, that there is an appearance of love in them.

THERE are no professing Christians who pretend, that this is an argument against the truth and saving nature of religious affections. But, on the other hand, there are some who suppose, it is a good evidence that affections are from the sanctifying and saving influences of the Holy Ghost. Their argument is, that Satan cannot love; this affection being directly contrary to the devil, whose very nature is enmity and malice. And it is true, that nothing is more excellent, heavenly, and divine, than a spirit of true Christian love to God and men: it is more excellent than knowledge, or prophecy, or miracles, or speaking with the tongue of men and angels. It is the chief of the graces of God's Spirit, and the life, essence, and sum of all true religion; and that by which we are most conformed to heaven, and most contrary to hell and the devil. But yet it is ill arguing from hence, that there are no counterfeits of it. It may be observed, that the more excellent any thing is, the more will be the counterfeits of it. Thus there are many more counterfeits of silver and gold, than of iron and copper: there are many false diamonds and rubies, but who goes about to counterfeit common stones? Though the more excellent things are, the more difficult it is to make any thing that

shall be like them, in their essential nature and internal virtue; yet the more manifold will the counterfeits be, and the more will art and subtilty be exercised and displayed, in an exact imitation of the outward appearance. Thus there is the greatest danger of being cheated in buying medicines that are most excellent and sovereign, though it be most difficult to imitate them, with any thing of the like value and virtue, and their counterfeits are good for nothing when we have them. So it is with Christian virtues and graces; the subtilty of Satan, and men's deceitful hearts, are wont chiefly to be exercised in counterfeiting those that are in highest repute. So there are, perhaps, no graces that have more counterfeits than love and humility; these being virtues wherein the beauty of a true Christian does especially appear.

But with respect to love; it is plain from the Scripture, that persons may have a kind of religious love, and yet have no saving grace. Christ speaks of many professing Christians that have such love, whose love will not continue, and so shall fail of salvation: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Which latter words plainly show, that those spoken of before, whose love shall not endure to the end, but wax cold, should not be saved.

Persons may seem to have love to God and Christ, yea, to have very strong and violent affections of this nature, and yet have no grace. For this was evidently the case with many graceless Jews, such as cried Jesus up so high, following him day and night, without meat, drink, or sleep; such as said, "Lord,

I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," and cried, " Hosanna to the son of David." *

The apostle seems to intimate, that there were many in his days who had a counterfeit love to Christ: " Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." The last word, in the original, signifies *in corruption;* which shows, that the apostle was sensible that there were many who had a kind of love to Christ, whose love was not pure and spiritual.

So also Christian love to the people of God may be counterfeited. It is evident from the Scripture, that there may be strong affections of this kind without saving grace; as there were in the Galatians towards the apostle Paul, when they were ready to pluck out their eyes and give them to him; although the apostle expresses his fear that their affections were come to nothing, and that he had bestowed upon them labour in vain.

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* Agreeable to this, Mr. Stoddard observes, in his *Guide to Christ*, that some sinners have pangs of affection, and give an account, that they find a spirit of love to God, and of their aiming at the glory of God, having that which has a great resemblance of saving grace; and that sometimes their common affections are stronger than saving. And supposes, that sometimes natural men may have such violent pangs of false affection to God, that they may think themselves willing to be damned.—Pages 21, and 65.

CHAPTER VII.

Persons having Religious Affections of many kinds, accompanying one another, is not sufficient to determine whether they have any Gracious Affections or not.

THOUGH false religion is wont to be maimed and monstrous, and not to have that entireness and symmetry of parts which is to be seen in true religion; yet there may be a great variety of false affections together, that may resemble gracious affections.

It is evident that there are counterfeits of all kinds of gracious affections; as of love to God, and love to the brethren, as has been just now observed; so of godly sorrow for sin, as in Pharaoh, Saul, and Ahab, and the children of Israel in the wilderness:* and of the fear of God, as in the Samaritans, who feared the Lord, and served their own gods at the same time; and those enemies of God we read of,† who, "through the greatness of God's power submit themselves to him," or, as it is in the Hebrew, "lie unto him;" that is, yield a counterfeit reverence and submission: so of a gracious gratitude, as in the children of Israel who sang praises at the Red Sea, and Naaman the Syrian, after his miraculous cure of his leprosy.

So of spiritual joy, as in the stony-ground hearers, and particularly many of John the Baptist's hearers.

* Exod. ix. 27. 1 Sam. xxiv. 16, 17. and xxvi. 21. 1 Kings xxi. 27.
† Psalm lxvi. 2.

So of zeal, as in Jehu;* and in Paul before his conversion,† and the unbelieving Jews.‡ So graceless persons may have earnest religious desires, which may be like Balaam's desires, which he expresses under an extraordinary view that he had of the happy state of God's people, as distinguished from all the rest of the world. They may also have a strong hope of eternal life, as the Pharisees had.

And as men, while in a state of nature, are capable of resemblance of all kinds of religious affections, so nothing hinders but that they may have many of them together. And what appears in fact, does abundantly evince that it is very often so indeed. It seems commonly to be the case, that when false affections are raised high, many false affections attend each other. The multitude that attended Christ into Jerusalem, after that great miracle of raising Lazarus, seem to be moved with many religious affections at once, and all in a high degree. They seem to be filled with admiration, and there was a show of a high affection of love, and also of a great degree of reverence, in their laying their garments on the ground, for Christ to tread upon; and also of great gratitude to him, for the great and good works he had wrought, praising him with loud voices for his salvation; and earnest desires of the coming of God's kingdom, which they supposed Jesus was now about to set up; and showed great hopes and raised expectations of it, expecting it would immediately appear; and hence were filled with joy, by which they were

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* 2 Kings x. 16. † Gal. i. 14. Phil. iii. 6.
‡ Acts xxii. 3. Rom. x. 2.

so animated in their acclamations, as to make the whole city ring with the noise of them; and appeared great in their zeal and forwardness to attend Jesus, and assist him without further delay, now in the time of the great feast of the passover, to set up his kingdom. And it is easy, from nature, and the nature of the affections, to give an account why, when one affection is raised very high, that it should excite others; especially if the affection which is raised high be that of counterfeit love, as it was in the multitude who cried "Hosanna." This will naturally draw many other affections after it. For, as was observed before, love is the chief of the affections, and, as it were, the fountain of them. Let us suppose a person who has been for some time in great exercise and terror through fear of hell, and his heart weakened with distress and fearful apprehensions, and upon the brink of despair, and is all at once delivered, by being firmly made to believe, through some delusion of Satan, that God has pardoned him, and accepts him as the object of his dear love, and promises him eternal life; or suppose, through some vision, or strong idea or imagination, suddenly excited in him, of a person with a beautiful countenance smiling on him, and with arms open, and with blood dropping down, which the person conceives to be Christ, without any other enlightening of the understanding, to give a view of the spiritual divine excellency of Christ and his fulness, and of the way of salvation revealed in the gospel; or perhaps by some voice or words, coming as if they were spoken to him, such as these, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee;" or, "Fear not, it is the Father's good

pleasure to give you the kingdom," which he takes to be immediately spoken by God to him, though there was no preceding acceptance of Christ, or closing of the heart with him: I say, if we should suppose such a case, what various passions would naturally crowd at once, or one after another, into such a person's mind? It is easy to be accounted for, from mere principles of nature, that a person's heart, on such an occasion, should be raised up to the skies with transports of joy, and be filled with fervent affection, to that imaginary God or Redeemer, who he supposes has thus rescued him from the jaws of such dreadful destruction, of which his soul was so amazed with the fears, and has received him with such endearment, as a peculiar favourite; and that now he should be filled with admiration and gratitude, and his mouth should be opened, and be full of talk about what he has experienced; and that, for a while, he should scarcely think and speak of any thing else, and should seem to magnify that God who has done so much for him, and call upon others to rejoice with him, and appear with a cheerful countenance, and talk with a loud voice; and though, before his deliverance, he was full of quarrellings against the justice of God, it should now be easy for him to submit to God, and his own unworthiness, and cry out against himself, and appear to be very humble before God, and lie at his feet as tame as a lamb; and that he should now confess his own unworthiness, and cry out, "Why me? why me?" Like Saul, when Samuel told him that God had appointed him to be a king, makes answer, "Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the

least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Wherefore then speakest thou so to me?" Much in the language of David, the true saint, "Who am I, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" Nor is it to be wondered at, that now he should delight to be with them who acknowledge and applaud his happy circumstances, and should love all such as esteem and admire him, and what he has experienced, and have violent zeal against all such as would make nothing of such things, and be disposed only to separate, and as it were to proclaim war with all who be not of his party, and should now glory in his sufferings, and be very much for condemning and censuring all who seem to doubt or make any difficulty of these things; and while the warmth of his affections last, should be mighty forward to take pains and deny himself, to promote the interest of the party whom he imagines favours such things, and seem earnestly desirous to increase the number of them, as the Pharisees compassed sea and land to make one proselyte.* And so I might go on, and mention many other things which will naturally arise in such circumstances. He must have but slightly considered human nature, who thinks such things as these cannot arise in this manner, without any supernatural interposition of divine power.

As from true divine love flow all Christian affections; so from a counterfeit love, in like manner, natu-

* "Associating with godly men does not prove that a man has grace: Ahithophel was David's companion. Sorrows for the afflictions of the church, and desires for the conversion of souls, do not prove it. These things may be found in carnal men, and so can be no evidences of grace."—*Stoddard's Nature of Saving Conversion*, p. 82.

rally flow other false affections. In both cases, love is the fountain, and the other affections are the streams. The various faculties, principles, and affections of the human nature, are, as it were, many channels from one fountain: if there be sweet water in the fountain, sweet water will from thence flow out into those various channels; but if the water in the fountain be poisonous, then poisonous streams will also flow into all those channels. So that the channels and streams will be alike, corresponding one with another; but the great difference will lie in the nature of the water. Or, man's nature may be compared to a tree, with many branches coming from one root; if the sap in the root be good, there will also be good sap distributed throughout the branches, and the fruit that is brought forth will be good and wholesome; but if the sap in the root and stock be poisonous, so it will be in the branches, and the fruit will be deadly. The tree in both cases may be alike: there may be an exact resemblance in shape; but the difference is found only in eating the fruit. It is thus (in some measure at least) oftentimes between saints and hypocrites. There is sometimes a very great similitude between true and false experiences, in their appearance, and in what is expressed and related by the subjects of them: and the difference between them is much like the difference between the dreams of Pharaoh's chief butler and baker; they seemed to be much alike, insomuch that when Joseph interpreted the chief butler's dream, that he should be delivered from his imprisonment, and restored to the king's favour, and his honourable office in the palace, the chief baker had raised hopes and expectations, and

told his dream also; but he was wofully disappointed; and though his dream was so much like the happy and well-boding dream of his companion, yet it was quite contrary in its issue.

CHAPTER VIII.

Nothing can certainly be determined concerning the nature of the Affections by this, that comforts and joys seem to follow awakenings and convictions of conscience, in a certain order.

MANY persons seem to be prejudiced against affections and experiences that come in such a method, as has been much insisted on by many divines: first, such awakenings, fears, and awful apprehensions, followed with such legal humblings, in a sense of total sinfulness and helplessness, and then, such and such light and comfort. They look upon all such schemes, laying down such methods and steps, to be men's devising: and particularly, if high affections of joy follow great distress and terror, it is made, by many, an argument against those affections. But such prejudices and objections are without reason or Scripture. Surely it cannot be unreasonable to suppose, that before God delivers persons from a state of sin and exposure to eternal destruction, he should give them some considerable sense of the evil from which he delivers them; that they may be delivered sensibly, and understand their own salvation, and know something of what God does for them. As men

that are saved are in two exceedingly different states; first a state of condemnation, and then in a state of justification and blessedness; and as God, in the work of the salvation of mankind, deals with them suitably to their intelligent rational nature; so it seems reasonable, and agreeable to God's wisdom, that men who are saved should sensibly be in these two states: first, that they should sensibly to themselves be in a state of condemnation, and so in a state of woful calamity and dreadful misery; and so afterwards sensibly in a state of deliverance and happiness; and that they should be first sensible of their absolute extreme necessity, and afterwards of Christ's sufficiency, and God's mercy through him.

That it is God's manner of dealing with men, to lead them into a wilderness before he speaks comfortably to them, and so to order it, that they shall be brought into distress, and made to see their own helplessness and absolute dependence on his power and grace, before he appears to work any great deliverance for them, is abundantly manifest by the Scripture. Then is God wont to "repent himself for his professing people, when their strength is gone, and there is none shut up or left," and when they are brought to see that their false gods cannot help them, and that the rock in whom they trusted is vain. Before God delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt, they were prepared for it, by being made to see that they were in an evil case, and to cry unto God, because of their hard bondage. And before God wrought that great deliverance for them at the Red Sea, they were brought into great distress: the wilderness had shut them in, they could

not turn to the right hand nor the left, and the Red Sea was before them, and the great Egyptian host behind; and they were brought to see that they could do nothing to help themselves, and that, if God did not help them, they should be immediately swallowed up; and then God appeared, and turned their cries into songs. So, before they were brought to their rest, and to enjoy the milk and honey of Canaan, God "led them through a great and terrible wilderness, that he might humble them, and teach them what was in their heart, and so do them good in their latter end." The woman that had the issue of blood twelve years, was not delivered, until she had first "spent all her living on earthly physicians, and could not be healed of any," and so was left helpless, having no more money to spend: and then she came to the great Physician, without any money or price, and was healed by him. Before Christ would answer the request of the woman of Canaan, he first seemed utterly to deny her, and humbled her, and brought her to own herself worthy to be called a dog; and then he showed her mercy, and received her as a dear child. The apostle Paul, before a remarkable deliverance, was "pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that he despaired even of life; but had the sentence of death in himself, that he might not trust in himself, but in God that raiseth the dead." There was first a great tempest, and the ship was covered with the waves, and just ready to sink, and the disciples were brought to cry to Jesus, "Lord, save us—we perish;" and then the winds and seas were rebuked, and there was a great calm. The leper, before he is cleansed, must have

his mouth stopped, by a covering over his upper lip, and was to acknowledge his great misery and utter uncleanness, by rending his clothes, and crying, "Unclean, unclean!" And backsliding Israel, before God heals them, are brought to "acknowledge that they have sinned, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord," and to see that "they lie down in their shame, and that confusion covers them, and that in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains," and that God only can save them. Joseph, who was sold by his brethren, and therein was a type of Christ, brings his brethren into great perplexity and distress, and brings them to reflect on their sin, and to say, "We are verily guilty;" and at last to resign themselves up entirely into his hands for bondmen; and then reveals himself to them, as their brother and their saviour.

And if we consider those extraordinary manifestations which God made of himself to saints of old, we shall find that he commonly first manifested himself in a way which was terrible, and then by those things that were comfortable. So it was with Abraham: first, a horror of great darkness fell upon him, and then God revealed himself to him in sweet promises. So it was with Moses at Mount Sinai: first, God appeared to him in all the terrors of his dreadful majesty, so that Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake," and then he made all his goodness to pass before him, and proclaimed his name, "The Lord God, gracious and merciful," &c. So it was with Elijah: first, there is a stormy wind, and earthquake, and devouring fire, and then a still, small, sweet voice. So it was with Daniel: he first saw

Christ's countenance as lightning, that terrified him, and caused him to faint away; and then he is strengthened and refreshed with such comfortable words as these, "O Daniel, a man greatly beloved." So it was with the apostle John. And there is an analogy observable in God's dispensations and deliverances which he works for his people, and the manifestation which he makes of himself to them, both ordinary and extraordinary.

But there are many things in Scripture which more directly show, that this is God's ordinary manner in working salvation for the souls of men, and in the manifestations God makes of himself, and of his mercy in Christ, in the ordinary works of his grace on the hearts of sinners. The servant that owed his prince ten thousand talents, is first held to his debt, and the king pronounces sentence of condemnation upon him, and commands him to be sold, and his wife and children, and payment to be made; and thus he humbles him, and brings him to own the whole debt to be just, and then forgives him all. The prodigal son spends all he has, and is brought to see himself in extreme circumstances, and to humble himself, and own his unworthiness, before he is relieved and feasted by his father. Old inveterate wounds must be searched to the bottom, in order to healing; and the Scripture compares sin, the wound of the soul, to this; and speaks of healing this wound without thus searching it, as vain and deceitful. Christ, in the work of his grace on the hearts of men, is compared to rain on the mown grass, grass that is cut down with a scythe, representing his refreshing, comforting influences on the wounded spirit. Our first

parents, after they had sinned, were first terrified with God's majesty and justice, and had their sin, with its aggravations, set before them by their Judge, before they were relieved by the promise of the seed of the woman. Christians are spoken of as those "that have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them;" which representation implies great fear, and sense of danger, preceding. To the like purpose, Christ is called "a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, and as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." And it seems to be the natural import of the word *gospel*, glad tidings, that it is news of deliverance and salvation, after great fear and distress. There is also reason to suppose that God deals with particular believers, as he dealt with his church, which he first made to hear his voice in the law, with terrible thunders and lightnings, and kept her under that schoolmaster, to prepare her for Christ; and then comforted her with the joyful sound of the gospel from Mount Sion. So, likewise, John the Baptist came to prepare the way for Christ, and prepare men's hearts for his reception, by showing them their sins, and by bringing the self-righteous Jews off from their own righteousness, telling them that they were "a generation of vipers," and showing them their danger of "the wrath to come," telling them that "the axe was laid at the foot of the trees," &c.

And if it be indeed God's manner, (as I think the foregoing considerations show that it undoubtedly is,) before he gives men the comfort of a deliverance from their sin and misery, to give them a consider-

able sense of the greatness and dreadfulness of those evils, and their extreme wretchedness by reason of them; surely it is not unreasonable to suppose, that persons, at least, oftentimes while under these views, should have great distresses and terrible apprehensions of mind; especially if it be considered what these evils are of which they have a view; which are no other than great and manifold sins, against the infinite majesty of the great Jehovah, and the suffering of the fierceness of his wrath to all eternity. And the more so still, when we have many plain instances in Scripture, of persons that have actually been brought into great distress by such convictions, before they have received saving consolations: as the multitude at Jerusalem, who were "pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" and the apostle Paul, who trembled and was astonished, before he was comforted; and the jailor, when "he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

From these things it appears to be very unreasonable in professing Christians, to make this an objection against the truth and spiritual nature of the comfortable and joyful affections which any have, that they follow such awful apprehensions and distresses as have been mentioned.

And, on the other hand, it is no evidence that comforts and joys are right, because they succeed great terrors, and amazing fears of hell.* This seems

* Mr. Shepard speaks of "men being cast down as low as hell by sorrow, and lying under chains, quaking in apprehension of ter-

to be what some persons lay great weight upon; esteeming great terrors an evidence of a great work of the law wrought on the heart, well preparing the way for solid comfort: not considering that terror, and a conviction of conscience, are different things. For though convictions of conscience do often cause terror, yet they do not consist in it; and terrors do often arise from other causes. Convictions of conscience, through the influences of God's Spirit, consist in conviction of sinfulness of heart and practice, and of the dreadfulness of sin, as committed against a God of terrible majesty, infinite holiness, and hatred of sin, and strict justice in punishing it. But there are some persons that have frightful apprehensions of hell, a dreadful pit ready to swallow them up, and flames just ready to lay hold of them, and devils around them, ready to seize them; who, at the same time, seem to have very little proper enlightenings of conscience, really convincing them of their sinfulness of heart and life. The devil, if permitted, can terrify men as well as the Spirit of God: it is a work natural to him, and he has many ways of doing it, in a manner tending to no good. He may exceedingly affright persons, by impressing on them many external images and ideas, of a countenance frowning, a sword drawn, black clouds of vengeance, words of an awful doom pronounced,* hell gaping, devils coming, and the like,

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ror to come, and then raised up to heaven in joy, not able to live; and yet not rent from lust: and such are objects of pity now, and are like to be the objects of terror at the great day."—*Parable of the Ten Virgins*, P. I. p. 125.

* "The way of the Spirit's working, when it does convince men, is by enlightening natural conscience. The Spirit does not work by giving a testimony, but by assisting natural conscience

not to convince persons of things that are true, and revealed in the word of God, but to lead them to vain and groundless determination; as that their day is past, that they are reprobated, that God is implacable, that he has come to a resolution immediately to cut them off, &c.

And the terrors which some persons have, are very much owing to the particular constitution and temper they are of. Nothing is more manifest, than that some persons are of such a temper and frame, that their imaginations are more strongly impressed with every thing with which they are affected, than others; and the impression on the imagination reacts on the affection, and raises that still higher; and so affection and imagination act reciprocally on one another, till their affection is raised to a vast height, and the person is swallowed up, and loses all possession of himself.*

And some speak of a great sight they have of their wickedness, who really, when the matter comes to be well examined into and thoroughly weighed, are found to have little or no convictions of conscience. They tell of a dreadful hard heart, and how their heart lies like a stone; when truly they have none of those things in their minds or thoughts, wherein the

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to do its work. Natural conscience is the instrument in the hand of God, to accuse, condemn, terrify, and to urge to duty. The Spirit of God leads men into the consideration of their danger, and makes them to be affected therewith: Prov. xx. 27. 'The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly.'"—*Stoddard's Guide to Christ*, p. 44.

* The famous Mr. Perkins distinguishes between "those sorrows that come through convictions of conscience, and melancholic passions arising only from mere imaginations, strongly conceived in the brain; which, he says, usually come on a sudden, like lightning into a house."—*Vol. I. of his Works*, p. 385.

hardness of men's hearts does really consist. They tell of a dreadful load and sink of sin, a heap of black and loathsome filthiness within them; when, if the matter be carefully inquired into, they have not in view any thing wherein the corruption of nature does truly consist, nor have they any thought of any particular thing wherein their hearts are sinfully defective, or fall short of what ought to be in them, or any exercises at all of corruption in them. And many think also they have great convictions of their actual sins, who truly have none. They tell how their sins are set in order before them, they see them stand encompassing them round in a row, with a dreadful frightful appearance; when really they have not so much as one of the sins they have been guilty of in the course of their lives, coming into view, of which they are affected with the aggravations.

And if persons have had great terrors which really have been from the awakening and convincing influences of the Spirit of God, it doth not thence follow that their terrors must needs issue in true comfort. The unmortified corruption of the heart may quench the Spirit of God, (after he has been striving,) by leading men to presumptuous, and self-exalting hopes and joys, as well as otherwise. It is not every woman who is really in travail, that brings forth a real child; but it may be a monstrous production, without any thing of the form or properties of human nature belonging to it. Pharaoh's chief baker, after he had lain in the dungeon with Joseph, had a vision that raised his hopes, and he was lifted up out of the dungeon, as well as the chief butler; but it was to be hanged.

But if comforts and joys do not only come after great terrors and awakenings, but there be an appearance of such preparatory convictions and humiliations, and brought about very distinctly, by such steps, and in such a method, as has frequently been observable in true converts; this is no certain sign that the light and comforts which follow are true and saving. And for these following reasons:—

First, As the devil can counterfeit all the saving operations and graces of the Spirit of God, so he can counterfeit those operations that are preparatory to grace. If Satan can counterfeit those effects of God's Spirit which are special, divine, and sanctifying, so that there shall be a very great resemblance in all that can be observed by others; much more easily may he imitate those works of God's Spirit which are common, and of which men, while they are yet his own children, are the subjects. These works are in nowise so much above him as the other. There are no works of God that are so high and divine, and above the powers of nature, and out of the reach of the power of all creatures, as those works of his Spirit, whereby he forms the creature in his own image, and makes it to be a partaker of the divine nature. But if the devil can be the author of such resemblances as these, without doubt he may of those that are of an infinitely inferior kind. And it is abundantly evident in fact, that there are false humiliations, and false submissions, as well as false comforts.* How far

* The venerable Stoddard observes, "A man may say, that now he can justify God however he deals with him, and not be brought off from his own righteousness; and that some men do justify God, from a partial conviction of the righteousness of their condemnation: conscience takes notice of their sinfulness, and

was Saul brought, though a very wicked man, and of a haughty spirit, when he (though a great king) was brought, in conviction of his sin, as it were to fall down, all in tears, weeping aloud, before David his own subject, (and one that he had for along time mortally hated, and openly treated as an enemy,) and condemn himself before him, crying out, "Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil?" And at another time, "I have sinned, I have played the fool, I have erred exceedingly." And yet Saul seems then to have had very little of the influences of the Spirit of God, it being after God's Spirit had departed from him, and given him up, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. And if this proud monarch, in a pang of affection, was brought to humble himself so low, before a subject that he hated, and still continued an enemy to, there doubtless may be appearances of great conviction and humiliation in men before God, while they yet remain enemies to him, and though they finally continue so. There is oftentimes in men, who are terrified through fears of hell, a great appearance of their being brought off from their own righteousness, when they are not brought off from it in all ways, although they are in many ways that are more plain and visible. They have only exchanged some ways of trusting in their own righteousness, for others that are more secret and subtle. Oftentimes a great degree of discour-

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tells them that they may be righteously damned; as Pharaoh who justified God, Exod. ix. 27. And they give some kind of consent to it, but many times it does not continue; they have only a pang upon them, that usually dies away after a little time."—*Guide to Christ*, p. 71.

agement, as to many things they used to depend upon, is taken for humiliation; and that is called a submission to God, which is no absolute submission, but has some secret bargain in it, that it is hard to discover.

Secondly, If the operations and effects of the Spirit of God, in the convictions and comforts of true converts, may be sophisticated, then the order of them may be imitated. If Satan can imitate the things themselves, he may easily put them one after another, in such a certain order. If the devil can make A, B, and C, it is as easy for him to put A first, and B next, and C next, as to range them in a contrary order. The nature of divine things is harder for the devil to imitate, than their order. He cannot exactly imitate divine operations in their nature, though his counterfeits may be very much like them in external appearance; but he can exactly imitate their order. When counterfeits are made, there is no divine power needful to the placing one of them first, and another last. And therefore, no order or method of operations and experiences is any certain sign of their divinity. That only is to be trusted to, as a certain evidence of grace, which Satan cannot do, and which it is impossible should be brought to pass by any power short of divine.

Thirdly, We have no certain rule to determine how far God's own Spirit may go in those operations and convictions which in themselves are not spiritual and saving, and yet the person that is the subject of them never be converted, but fall short of salvation at last. There is no necessary connection in the nature of things, between any thing that a natural

man may experience, while in a state of nature, and the saving grace of God's Spirit. And if there be no connection in the nature of things, then there can be no known and certain connection at all, unless it be by divine revelation. But there is no revealed certain connection between a state of salvation, and any thing of which a natural man can be the subject, before he believes in Christ. God has revealed no certain connection between salvation, and any qualifications in men, but only grace and its fruits. And therefore we do not find any legal convictions, or comforts following these legal convictions, in any certain method or order, ever once mentioned in the Scripture, as certain signs of grace, or things peculiar to the saints; although we do find gracious operations and effects themselves so mentioned thousands of times: which should be enough with Christians, who are willing to have the word of God, rather than their own philosophy, and experiences, and conjectures, as their sufficient and sure guide in things of this nature.

Fourthly, Experience proves, that persons seeming to have convictions and comforts following one another in such a method and order, as is frequently observable in true converts, is no certain sign of grace.* I appeal to all those ministers in this land, who have had much occasion to deal with souls in the late ex-

* Mr. Stoddard, who had much experience of things of this nature, long ago observed, that converted and unconverted men cannot be certainly distinguished by the account they give of their experience; the same relation of experiences being common to both. And that many persons have given a fair account of a work of conversion, that have carried well in the eye of the world for several years, but have not proved well at last.—*Appeal to the Learned*, pp. 75, 76.

traordinary season, whether there has not been many who do not prove well, that have given a fair account of their experiences, and have seemed to be converted according to rule, that is, with convictions and affections, succeeding distinctly and exactly, in that order and method, which has been ordinarily insisted on, as the order of the operations of the Spirit of God in conversion.

And, as a seeming to have this distinctness as to steps and method, is no certain sign that a person is converted; so, a being without it, is no evidence that a person is not converted. For though it might be made evident to a demonstration, on Scripture principles, that a sinner cannot be brought heartily to receive Christ as his Saviour, who is not convinced of his sin and misery, and of his own emptiness and helplessness, and his just desert of eternal condemnation; and that, therefore, such convictions must be some way implied by what is wrought in his soul: yet nothing proves it to be necessary, that all those things which are implied or presupposed in an act of faith in Christ, must be plainly and distinctly wrought in the soul, in so many successive and separate works of the Spirit, that each of them shall be plain and manifest in all who are truly converted. On the contrary, (as Mr. Shepard observes,) sometimes the change made in a saint, at first, is like a confused chaos; so that the saints know not what to make of it. The manner of the Spirit's proceeding in them that are born of the Spirit, is very often exceedingly mysterious and unsearchable: we, as it were, hear the sound of it; its effect is discernible; but no man can tell whence it came, or whither it went. And

it is oftentimes as difficult to know the way of the Spirit in the new birth, as in the first birth: "Thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, or how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the works of God, that worketh all." The ingenerating of a principle of grace in the soul, seems in Scripture to be compared to the conceiving of Christ in the womb;* and therefore the church is called Christ's mother;† and so is every particular believer.‡ And the conception of Christ in the womb of the blessed virgin, by the power of the Holy Ghost, seems to be a designed resemblance of the conception of Christ in the soul of a believer, by the power of the same Holy Ghost. And we know not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow, either in the womb, or heart, that conceives this holy Child. The new creature may use that language: "I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well." "My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret." Concerning the generation of Christ, both in his person, and also in the hearts of his people, it may be said, "Who can declare his generation?" We know not the works of God, that worketh all. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing," and to have "his path as it were in the mighty waters, that his footsteps may not be known;" and especially in the works of his Spirit on the hearts of men, which are the highest and chief of his works. And therefore it is said, "Who hath directed the Spirit

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* Gal. iv. 19. † Cant. iii. 11. ‡ Matth. xii. 49, 50.

of the Lord? or, being his counsellor, hath taught him?" It is to be feared that some have gone too far towards directing the Spirit of the Lord, and marking out his footsteps for him, and limiting him to certain steps and methods. Experience plainly shows, that God's Spirit is unsearchable and untraceable, in some of the best of Christians, in the method of his operations in their conversion. Nor does the Spirit of God proceed discernibly in the steps of a particular established scheme, half so often as is imagined. A scheme of what is necessary, and according to a rule already received and established by common opinion, has a vast (though to many a very insensible) influence in forming persons' notions of the steps and method of their own experiences. I know very well what their way is; for I have had much opportunity to observe it. Very often, at first, their experiences appear like a confused chaos, as Mr. Shepard expresses it: but then those passages of their experiences are picked out, that have most of the appearance of such particular steps that are insisted on; and these are dwelt upon in the thoughts, and these are told of from time to time, in the relation they give: these parts grow brighter and brighter in their view; and others, being neglected, grow more and more obscure; and what they have experienced, is insensibly strained, to bring all to an exact conformity to the scheme that is established. And it becomes natural for ministers who have to deal with them, and direct them that insist upon distinctness and clearness of method, to do so too. But yet there has been so much to be seen of the operations of the Spirit of God of late, that they who have had much

to do with souls, and are not blinded with a sevenfold veil of prejudice, must know that the Spirit is so exceedingly various in the manner of his operating, that in many cases it is impossible to trace him, or find out his way.

What we have principally to do with, in our inquiries into our own state, or in the directions we give to others, is the nature of the effect that God has produced in the soul. As to the steps which the Spirit of God took to produce that effect, we may leave them to him. We are often in Scripture expressly directed to try ourselves by the nature of the fruits of the Spirit; but nowhere by the Spirit's method of producing them.* Many greatly err in their notions of a clear work of conversion; calling that a clear work, where the successive steps of influence, and method of experience is clear: whereas that indeed is the clearest work, (not where the order of doing is clearest, but) where the spiritual and divine nature of the work done, and effect wrought, is most clear.

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* Mr. Shepard, speaking of the soul closing with Christ, says, "As a child cannot tell how his soul comes into it, nor it may be when; but afterwards it sees and feels that life, so that he were as bad as a beast, that should deny an immortal soul; so here."—*Parable of the Ten Virgins*, Part II. p. 176.

"If the man do not know the time of his conversion, or first closing with Christ, the minister may not draw any peremptory conclusion from thence, that he is not godly."—*Stoddard's Guide to Christ*, p. 83.

"Do not think there is no compunction, or sense of sin, wrought in the soul, because you cannot so clearly discern and feel it; nor the time of the working, and first beginning of it. I have known many that have come with their complaints, that they were never humbled, they never felt it so; yet there it hath been, and many times they have seen it, by the other spectacles, and blessed God for it."—*Shepard's Sound Believer*, p. 38.

CHAPTER IX.

It is no certain sign that the Religious Affections are such as have in them the nature of true Religion, or that they have not, that they dispose persons to spend much time in Religion, and to be zealously engaged in the external duties of worship.

This has, very unreasonably, been looked upon of late, as an argument against the religious affections which some have had, that they spend so much time in reading, praying, singing, hearing sermons, and the like. It is plain from the Scripture, that it is the tendency of true grace to cause persons to delight very much in such religious exercises. True grace had this effect on Anna the prophetess—"She departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day." And grace had this effect upon the primitive Christians in Jerusalem —"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God." Grace made Daniel delight in the duty of prayer, and solemnly to attend it three times a-day: as it also did David—"Evening, morning, and at noon will I pray." Grace makes the saints delight in singing praises to God: "Sing praises unto his name, for it is pleasant." And, "Praise ye the Lord: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant: and praise is comely." It also causes them to delight to hear the word of

God preached: it makes the gospel a joyful sound to them, and makes the feet of those who publish these good tidings to be beautiful: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings!" &c. It makes them love God's public worship: "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth." "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord. —Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Blessed is the man in whose heart are the ways of them, who, passing through the valley of Baca, go from strength to strength: every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. A day in thy courts is better than a thousand."

This is the nature of true grace. But yet, on the other hand, persons being disposed to abound, and to be zealously engaged in the external exercises of religion, and to spend much time in them, is no sure evidence of grace; because such a disposition is found in many that have no grace. So it was with the Israelites of old, whose services were abominable to God; they attended the "new moons, and sabbaths, and calling of assemblies, and spread forth their hands, and made many prayers." So it was

with the Pharisees; they "made long prayers, and fasted twice a-week." False religion may cause persons to be loud and earnest in prayer: "Ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to cause your voice to be heard on high." That religion which is not spiritual and saving, may cause men to delight in religious duties and ordinances: "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God." It may cause them to take delight in hearing the word of God preached; as it was with Ezekiel's hearers: "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not." So it was with Herod; he heard John the Baptist gladly. So it was with others of his hearers; "for a season they rejoiced in his light." So the stony-ground hearers heard tne word with joy.

Experience shows, that persons, from false religion, may be inclined to be exceedingly abundant in the external exercises of religion; yea, to give themselves up to them, and devote almost their whole time to them. Formerly, a sort of people were very numerous in the Romish church, called Recluses, who forsook the world, and utterly abandoned the society of mankind, and shut themselves up in a narrow cell,

with a vow never to stir out of it, nor to see the face of any of mankind any more; (unless that they might be visited in case of sickness;) to spend all their days in the exercise of devotion and converse with God. There were also in old time, great multitudes called Hermits and Anchorites, that left the world to spend all their days in lonesome deserts, to give themselves up to religious contemplations and exercises of devotion; some sorts of them having no dwellings, but the caves and vaults of the mountains, and no food but the spontaneous productions of the earth. I once lived, for many months, next door to a Jew, (the houses adjoining to one another,) and had much opportunity daily to observe him; who appeared to me the most devout person that ever I saw in my life; great part of his time being spent in acts of devotion at his eastern window, which opened next to mine, seeming to be most earnestly engaged, not only in the daytime, but sometimes whole nights.

CHAPTER X.

Nothing can be certainly known of the nature of Religious Affections, that they much dispose persons with their mouths to praise and glorify God.

This indeed is implied in what has been observed, of abounding and spending much time in the external exercises of religion; but because many seem to look upon it as a bright evidence of gracious affection, when persons appear greatly disposed to praise and

magnify God, to have their mouths full of his praises, and affectionally to be calling on others to praise and extol him, I thought it deserved a more particular consideration.

No Christian will make it an argument against a person, that he seems to have such a disposition; nor can it reasonably be looked upon as an evidence for a person, if those things that have been already observed and proved, be duly considered, namely, that persons, without grace, may have high affections towards God and Christ, and that their affections being strong, may fill their mouths, and incline them to speak much, and very earnestly, about the things with which they are affected, and that there may be counterfeits of all kinds of gracious affection. But it will appear more evidently, that this is no certain sign of grace, if we consider what instances the Scripture gives us of it in those that were graceless. We often have an account of this, in the multitude that were present when Christ preached and wrought miracles: "And immediately he arose, took up his bed, and went forth before them all, insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it in this fashion." So Matth. ix. 8. and Luke v. 26. Also Matth. xv. 31. "Insomuch that the multitude wondered when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and thus glorified the God of Israel." So we are told, that on occasion of Christ's raising the son of the widow of Nain, "There came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people." So we read of their glorifying

Christ, or speaking exceeding highly of him: "And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all." And how did they praise him with loud voices, crying, "Hosanna to the son of David; Hosanna in the highest: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," a little before he was crucified! And after Christ's ascension, when the apostles had healed the impotent man, we are told, that "all men glorified God for that which was done." When the Gentiles in Antioch of Pisidia, heard from Paul and Barnabas, that God would reject the Jews, and take the Gentiles to be his people in their room, they were affected with this goodness of God to the Gentiles, "and glorified the word of the Lord:" but all that did so were not true believers; but only a certain elect number of them; as is intimated in the account we have of it: "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." So of old, the children of Israel at the Red Sea, "sang God's praise; but soon forgat his works." And the Jews in Ezekiel's time, "with their mouth showed much love, while their heart went after their covetousness." And it is foretold of false professors, and real enemies of religion, that they should show a forwardness to glorify God: "Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified."

It is no certain sign that a person is graciously affected, if, in the midst of his hopes and comforts, he is greatly affected with God's unmerited mercy to him that is so unworthy, and seems greatly to extol

and magnify free grace. Those that yet remain with unmortified pride and enmity against God, may, when they imagine they have received extraordinary kindness from God, cry out of their unworthiness and magnify God's undeserved goodness to them, from no other conviction of their ill-deservings, and from no higher principle than Saul had, who, while he yet remained with unsubdued pride and enmity against David, was brought, though a king, to acknowledge his unworthiness, and cry out, "I have played the fool, I have erred exceedingly," and with great affection and admiration, to magnify and extol David's unmerited and unexampled kindness to him: and from no higher principle than that from whence Nebuchadnezzar was affected with God's dispensations, that he saw and was the subject of, and praises, extols, and honours the King of heaven. And both he and Darius, in their high affections, call upon all nations to praise God. Dan. iii. 28, 29, 30. and iv. 1, 2, 3, 34, 35, 37. and vi. 25, 26, 27.

CHAPTER XI.

It is no sign that Affections are right, or that they are wrong, that they make persons exceedingly confident that what they experience is divine, and that they are in a good estate.

It is an argument with some against persons, that they are deluded if they pretend to be assured of their good estate, and to be carried beyond all doubt-

ing of the favour of God; supposing that there is no such thing to be expected in the church of God, as a full and absolute assurance of hope; unless in some very extraordinary circumstances; as in the case of martyrdom: contrary to the doctrine of Protestants, which has been maintained by their most celebrated writers against the Papists; and contrary to the plainest Scripture evidence. It is manifest, that it was a common thing for the saints, of whom we have a history or particular account in Scripture, to be *assured.* God, in the plainest and most positive manner, revealed and testified his special favour to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Daniel, and others. Job often speaks of his sincerity and uprightness with the greatest imaginable confidence and assurance, often calling God to witness to it; and says plainly, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that I shall see him for myself, and not another." David, throughout the book of Psalms, almost every where speaks without any hesitancy, and in the most positive manner, of God as his God: glorying in him as his portion and heritage, his rock and confidence, his shield, salvation, and high tower, and the like. Hezekiah appeals to God, as one that knew that he had walked before him in truth, and with a perfect heart. Jesus Christ, in his dying discourse with his eleven disciples, in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of John, (which was as it were Christ's last will and testament to his disciples, and to his whole church,) often declares his special and everlasting love to them, in the plainest and most positive terms; and promises them, in the most absolute manner, a future participation with him in his glory; and tells them, at the same

time, that he does so, to the end that their joy might be full: "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." Also, at the conclusion of his whole discourse: "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Christ was not afraid of speaking too plainly and positively to them; he did not desire to hold them in the least suspense. And he concluded that last discourse of his with a prayer in their presence, wherein he speaks positively to his Father of those eleven disciples, as having all of them savingly known him, and believed in him, and received and kept his word; that they were not of the world; that for their sakes he sanctified himself; that his will was, that they should be with him in his glory; and tells his Father, that he spake these things in his prayer, to the end that his joy might be fulfilled in them. By these things it is evident, that it is agreeable to Christ's designs, and the ordering and disposition Christ makes of things in his church, that there should be sufficient and abundant provision made, that his saints might have full assurance of their future glory.

The apostle Paul, through all his epistles, speaks in an assured strain; ever speaking positively of his special relation to Christ, his Lord, and Master, and Redeemer, and his interest in, and expectation of, the future reward. It would be endless to take notice of all places that might be enumerated: I shall mention but three or four: "Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the

faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me at that day."

And the nature of the covenant of grace, and God's declared ends in the appointment and constitution of things in that covenant, do plainly show it to be God's design to make ample provision for the saints while upon earth, having an assured hope of eternal life. For so are all things ordered and contrived in that covenant, that every thing might be made sure on God's part.—"The covenant is ordered in all things and sure;" the promises are most full; very often repeated, and various ways exhibited; there are many witnesses, and many seals; and God has confirmed his promises with an oath. And God's declared design in all this is, that the heirs of the promises might have an undoubting hope, and full joy, in an assurance of their future glory. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us." But all this would be in vain, to any such purpose as the saints' strong consolation, and hope of their obtaining future glory, if, in ordinary cases, their interest in those

sure promises was not attainable. For God's promises and oaths, let them be as sure as they will, cannot give strong hope and comfort to any particular person, any farther than he can know that those promises are made to him. And in vain is provision made in Jesus Christ, that believers might be perfect as pertaining to the conscience, as is signified, Heb. ix. 9. if assurance of freedom from the guilt of sin is not attainable.

It further appears that assurance is not only attainable in some very extraordinary cases, but all Christians are directed to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure, and are told how they may do it, 2 Pet. i. 5—8. And it is spoken of as a thing very unbecoming in Christians, and an argument of something very blameable in them, not to know whether Christ be in them or not: "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" And it is implied, that it is an argument of a very blameable negligence in Christians, if they practise Christianity after such a manner as to remain uncertain of the reward: "I therefore so run, as not uncertainly." And to add no more, it is manifest, that Christians knowing their interests in the saving benefits of Christianity is a thing ordinarily attainable; because the apostles tell us by what means Christians (and not only apostles and martyrs) were wont to know this: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.—And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.—Hereby know we that we are

in him.—We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.—Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.—Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." So chap. iv. 13. and chap. v. 2. and ver. 19.

Therefore it must needs be very unreasonable to determine, that persons are hypocrites, and their affections wrong, because they seem to be out of doubt of their own salvation, and the affections they are the subjects of seem to banish all fears of hell.

On the other hand, it is no sufficient reason to determine that men are saints, and their affections gracious, because their affections are attended with an exceeding confidence that their state is good, and their affections divine.* Nothing can be certainly argued from their confidence, how great and strong soever it seems to be. If we see a man that boldly calls God his Father, and commonly speaks in the

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* "O professor, look carefully to your foundation: be not high-minded, but fear. You have, it may be, done and suffered many things in and for religion; you have excellent gifts and sweet comforts; a warm zeal for God, and high confidence in your integrity: all this may be right, for ought that I, or (it may be) you know; but yet it is possible it may be false also. You have sometimes judged yourselves, and pronounced yourselves upright; but remember, your final sentence is not yet pronounced by your Judge. And what if God weigh you over again, in his more equal balance, and should say, "MENE, TEKEL, Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting?" What a confounded man wilt thou be, under such a sentence! *Quæ splendent in conspectu hominis, sordent in conspectu Judicis;* things that are highly esteemed of men, are an abomination in the sight of God: he seeth not as men seeth. Thy heart may be false, and thou not know it; yea, it may be false, and thou strongly confident of its integrity."—*Flavel's Touchstone of Sincerity*, chap. ii. sect. 5.

"Some hypocrites are a great deal more confident than many saints."—*Stoddard's Discourses on the Way to know Sincerity and Hypocrisy*, p. 128.

most bold, familiar, and appropriating language in prayer: " My Father, my dear Redeemer, my sweet Saviour, my Beloved," and the like;—and it is a common thing for him to use the most confident expressions before men, about the goodness of his state; such as, " I know certainly that God is my Father; I know so surely as there is a God in heaven, that he is my God; I know I shall go to heaven, as sure as if I were there; I know that God is now manifesting himself to my soul, and is now smiling upon me;" and seems to have done for ever with any inquiry or examination into his state, as a thing sufficiently known, and out of doubt, and to contemn all that so much as intimate or suggest that there is some reason to doubt or fear whether all is right,—such things are no signs at all that it is indeed as he is confident it is.* Such an overbearing, high-handed, and violent sort of confidence as this, affecting to declare itself with a most glaring show in the sight of men, which is to be seen in many, has not the countenance of a true Christian assurance; it savours more of the spirit of the Pharisees, who never doubted but that they were saints, and the most eminent of saints, and were bold to go to God, and come up near to him, and lift u ptheir eyes, and thank him for the great distinction he had made

* " Doth the work of faith in some believers bear upon its top branches the full ripe fruits of a blessed assurance? Lo, what strong confidence, and high-built persuasions, of an interest in God, have sometimes been found in unsanctified ones! Yea, so strong may this false assurance be, that they dare boldly venture to go to the judgment-seat of God, and there defend it. Doth the Spirit of God fill the heart of the assured believer with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, giving them, through faith, a prelibation or foretaste of heaven itself, in those first-fruits of it? How near to this comes what the apostle supposes may be found in apostates!"—*Flavel's Husbandry Spiritualized,* chap. xii.

between them and other men; and when Christ intimated that they were blind and graceless, despised the suggestion: "And some of the Pharisees which were with him, heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also?" If they had more of the spirit of the publican, with their confidence, who, in a sense of his exceeding unworthiness, stood afar off, and durst not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote on his breast, and confessed himself a sinner, their confidence would have more of the aspect of the confidence of one that humbly trusts and hopes in Christ, and has no confidence in himself.

If we do but consider what the hearts of natural men are, what principles they are under the dominion of, what blindness and deceit, what self-flattery, self-exaltation, and self-confidence reigns there; we need not at all wonder that their high opinion of themselves, and confidence of their happy circumstances, be as high and strong as mountains, and as violent as a tempest, when once conscience is blinded, and convictions killed, with false, high affections, and those forementioned principles let loose, fed up and prompted by false joys and comforts, excited by some pleasing imaginations, impressed by Satan transforming himself into an angel of light.

When once a hypocrite is thus established in a false hope, he has not those things to cause him to call his hope in question, that oftentimes are the occasion of the doubting of true saints; as, *first*, he has not that cautious spirit, that great sense of the vast importance of a sure foundation, and that dread of being deceived. The comforts of the true saints increase a wakening and caution, and a lively sense

how great a thing it is to appear before an infinitely holy, just, and omniscient Judge. But false comforts put an end to these things, and dreadfully stupify the mind. *Secondly*, The hypocrite has not the knowledge of his own blindness, and the deceitfulness of his own heart, and that mean opinion of his own understanding, that the true saint has. Those that are deluded with false discoveries and affections, are evermore highly conceited of their light and understanding. *Thirdly*, The devil does not assault the hope of the hypocrite, as he does the hope of a true saint. The devil is a great enemy to a true Christian hope, not only because it tends greatly to the comfort of him that hath it, but also because it is of a holy, heavenly nature, greatly tending to promote and cherish grace in the heart, and a great incentive to strictness and diligence in the Christian life. But he is no enemy to the hope of a hypocrite, which above all things establishes his interest in him. A hypocrite may retain his hope without opposition, as long as he lives, the devil never disturbing, nor attempting to disturb it. But there is perhaps no true Christian but has his hope assaulted by him. Satan assaulted Christ himself, upon this, Whether he were the Son of God or not: and the servant is not above his Master, nor the disciple above his Lord; it is enough for the most privileged disciple in this world, to be as his Master. *Fourthly*, He who has a false hope, has not that sight of his own corruptions which the saint has. A true Christian has ten times more to do with his heart and its corruptions, than a hypocrite: and the sins of his heart and practice, appear to him in their blackness; they look dreadful;

and it often appears a very mysterious thing, that any grace can be consistent with such corruption, or should be in such a heart. But a false hope hides corruption, covers it all over, and the hypocrite looks clean and bright in his own eyes.

There are two sorts of hypocrites: one that are deceived with their outward morality and external religion; many of which are professed Arminians, in the doctrine of justification: and the other, are those that are deceived with false discoveries and elevations; which often cry down works, and men's own righteousness, and talk much of free grace; but at the same time make a righteousness of their discoveries, and of their humiliation, and exalt themselves to heaven with them. These two kinds of hypocrites, Mr. Shepard, in his Exposition of the Parable of the Ten Virgins, distinguishes by the names of *legal* and *evangelical* hypocrites; and often speaks of the latter as the worst. And it is evident that the latter are commonly by far the most confident in their hope, and with the most difficulty brought off from it: I have scarcely known the instance of such a one, in my life, that has been undeceived. The chief grounds of the confidence of many of them, are the very same kind of impulses and supposed revelations, (sometimes with texts of Scripture, and sometimes without,) that so many of late have had concerning future events; calling these impulses about their good estate, the witness of the Spirit; entirely misunderstanding the nature of the witness of the Spirit, as I shall show hereafter. Those that have had visions and impulses about other things, it has generally been to reveal such things as they are desirous

and fond of; and no wonder that persons who give heed to such things, have the same sort of vision or impressions about their own eternal salvation, to reveal to them that their sins are forgiven them, that their names are written in the book of life, that they are in high favour with God, &c. and especially when they earnestly seek, expect, and wait for evidence of their election and salvation this way, as the surest and most glorious evidence of it. Neither is it any wonder, that when they have such a supposed revelation of their good estate, it raises in them the highest degree of confidence of it. It is found, by abundant experience, that those who are led away by impulses and imagined revelations, are extremely confident; they suppose that the great JEHOVAH has declared such things to them; and having his immediate testimony, a strong confidence is the highest virtue. Hence they are bold to say, I know this or that—I know certainly—I am as sure as that I have a being, and the like; and they despise all argument and inquiry in the case. And, above all things else, it is easy to be accounted for, that impressions and impulses about that which is so pleasing, so suiting their self-love and pride, as their being the dear children of God, distinguished from most in the world in his favour, should make them strongly confident; especially when with their impulses and revelations they have high affections, which they take to be the most eminent exercises of grace. I have known several persons that have had a fond desire of something of a temporal nature, through a violent passion that has possessed them; and they have been earnestly pursuing the thing desired, and

have met with great difficulty and many discouragements in it, but at last have had an impression, or supposed revelation, that they should obtain what they sought; and they have looked upon it as a sure promise from the Most High, which has made them most ridiculously confident, against all reason to the contrary, and all events working against them. And there is nothing hinders, but that persons who are seeking their salvation, may be deceived by the like delusive impressions, and be made confident of it, the same way.

The confidence of many hypocrites, such as Mr. Shepard calls *evangelical hypocrites*, is like the confidence of some mad men, who think they are kings: they will maintain it against all reason and evidence. And, in one sense, it is much more immoveable than a truly gracious assurance: a true assurance is not upheld, but by the soul being kept in a holy frame, and grace maintained in lively exercise. If the actings of grace do much decay in the Christian, and he falls into a lifeless frame, he loses his assurance: but this confidence of hypocrites will not be shaken by sin; they (at least some of them) will maintain their boldness in their hope, in the most corrupt frames and wicked ways; which is a sure evidence of their delusion.*

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* Mr. Shepard speaks of it as a "presumptuous peace, that is not interrupted and broke by evil works." And says, that "the Spirit will sigh, and not sing in that bosom, whence corrupt dispositions and passions break out." And that "though men in such frames may seem to maintain the consolation of the Spirit, and not suspect their hypocrisy, under pretence of trusting the Lord's mercy; yet they cannot avoid the condemnation of the world."—*Parable of the Ten Virgins*, Part I. p. 139.

Dr. Ames speaks of it as a thing by which the peace of a wicked

And here I cannot but observe, that there are certain doctrines often preached to the people, which need to be delivered with more caution and explanation than they frequently are; for, as they are by many understood, they tend greatly to establish this delusion and false confidence of hypocrites. The doctrines I speak of, are those of "Christians living by faith, not by sight; their giving glory to God, by trusting him in the dark; living upon Christ, and not upon experiences; not making their good frames the foundation of their faith:" which are excellent and important doctrines indeed, rightly understood, but corrupt and destructive as many understand them. The Scripture speaks of living or walking by faith, and not by sight, in no other way than these, namely, a being governed by a respect to eternal things, which are the objects of faith, and are not seen, and not by a respect to temporal things, which are seen; and believing things revealed, that we never saw with bodily eyes; and also living by faith in the promise of future things, without yet seeing or enjoying the things promised, or knowing the way how they can be fulfilled. This will be easily evident to any one that looks over the scriptures, which speak of *faith* in opposition to *sight*.* But this doctrine, as it is understood by many, is, that Christians ought firmly to believe and trust in Christ, without spiritual sight or light, and although they are in a dark dead frame,

man may be distinguished from the peace of a godly man, "That the peace of a wicked man continues, whether he performs the duties of piety and righteousness or not, provided those crimes are avoided that appear horrid to nature itself."—*Cases of Conscience*, Book III. Chap. vii.

* 2 Cor. iv. 18. and v. 7. Heb. xi. 1, 8, 13, 17, 27, 29. Rom. viii. 24. John xx. 29.

and for the present have no spiritual experiences or discoveries. And it is truly the duty of those who are thus in darkness, to come out of darkness into light, and believe. But that they should confidently believe and trust, while they yet remain without spiritual light or sight, is an anti-scriptural and absurd doctrine.—The Scripture is ignorant of any such faith in Christ of the operation of God, that is not founded in a spiritual sight of Christ. That believing on Christ which accompanies a title to everlasting life, is a "seeing the Son, and believing on him." True faith in Christ is never exercised, any further than persons "behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and have the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." They into whose minds "the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, does not shine, they believe not." That faith which is without spiritual light, is not the faith of the children of the light, and of the day; but the presumption of the children of darkness. And therefore, to press and urge them to believe, without any spiritual light or sight, tends greatly to help forward the delusions of the prince of darkness. Men not only cannot exercise faith without some spiritual light, but they can exercise faith only just in such proportion as they have spiritual light. Men will trust in God no farther than they know him: and they cannot exercise faith in him one iota farther than they have a sight of his fulness and faithfulness in exercise. Nor can they have the exercise of trust in God, any farther than they are in a gracious frame. They that are in a dead carnal frame, doubtless ought to trust in God; because that would

be the same thing as coming out of their bad frame, and turning to God: but to exhort men confidently to trust in God, and so hold up their hope and peace, though they are not in a gracious frame, is the same thing in effect, as to exhort them confidentially to trust in God, but not with a gracious trust: and what is that but a wicked presumption? It is just as impossible for men to have a strong or lively trust in God, when they have no lively exercise of grace, or sensible Christian experiences, as it is for them to be in the lively exercises of grace, without the exercises of grace.

It is true, that it is the duty of God's people to trust in him when in darkness; and though they remain still in darkness, in that sense, they ought to trust in God when the aspects of his providence are dark, and look as though God had forsaken them, and did not hear their prayers, and many clouds gather, and many enemies surround them, with a formidable aspect, threatening to swallow them up, and all events of providence seem to be against them, all circumstances seem to render the promises of God difficult to be fulfilled, and God must be trusted out of sight, that is, when we cannot see which way it is possible for him to fulfil his word, and every thing but God's mere word makes it look unlikely, so that if they believe, they must hope against hope. Thus the ancient Patriarchs, and Job, and the Psalmist, and Jeremiah, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshech, Abednego, and the apostle Paul, gave glory to God by trusting in God in darkness. And we have many instances of such a glorious victorious faith in the eleventh of the Hebrews. But how different a thing is this, from trust-

ing in God without spiritual sight, and being at the same time in a dead and carnal frame!

There is also such a thing as spiritual light being let into the soul in one way, when it is not in another; and there is such a thing as the saints trusting in God, and also knowing their good estate, when they are destitute of some kinds of experience. As for instance, they may have clear views of God's sufficiency and faithfulness, and so confidently trust in him, and know that they are his children; and at the same time not have such clear and sweet ideas of his love, as at other times: for it was thus with Christ himself in his last passion. And they may have views of much of God's sovereignty, holiness, and all-sufficiency, enabling them quietly to submit to him, and exercise a sweet and most encouraging hope in God's fulness, when they are not satisfied of their own good estate. But how different things are these, from confidently trusting in God without spiritual light or experience!

Those that insist on persons living by faith, when they have no experience, and are in very bad frames, are also very absurd in their notions of faith. What they mean by faith is, believing that they are in a good estate. Hence they count it a dreadful sin for them to doubt of their state, whatever frames they are in, and whatever wicked things they do, because it is the great and heinous sin of unbelief; and he is the best man, and puts most honour upon God, that maintains his hope of his good estate the most confidently and immoveably, when he has the least light or experience; that is to say, when he is in the worst and wickedest frame: because, forsooth, that is a sign

that he is strong in faith, giving glory to God, and against hope believes in hope. But out of what Bible do they learn this notion of faith, that it is a man's confidently believing that he is in a good estate?* If this be faith, the Pharisees had faith in an eminent degree, some of which, Christ teaches, committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. The Scripture represents faith, as that by which men are brought into a good estate; and therefore it cannot be the same thing as believing that they are already in a good estate. To suppose that faith consists in believing that they are in a good estate, is in effect the same thing, as to suppose that faith consists in a person believing that he has faith, or in believing that he believes.

Indeed, persons doubting of their good estate, may in several respects arise from unbelief. It may be from unbelief, or because they have so little faith, that they have so little evidence of their good estate: if they had more experience of the actings of faith, and so more experience of the exercise of grace, they would have clearer evidence that their state was good; and their doubts would be removed. And then their doubting of their state may be from unbelief; thus,

* "Men do not know that they are godly, by believing that they are godly. We know many things by faith, Heb. xi. 3. 'By faith we understand that the worlds were made by the word of God. Faith is the evidence of things not seen,' Heb. xi. 1. Thus men know the Trinity of persons of the Godhead; that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; that he that believes in him will have eternal life; the resurrection of the dead. And if God should tell a saint that he hath grace, he might know it by believing the word of God. But it is not this way, that godly men do know that they have grace. It is not revealed in the word, and the Spirit of God doth not testify it to particular persons."—*Stoddard's Nature of Saving Conversion*, pp. 83, 84.

though there be many things that are good evidences of a work of grace in them, yet they doubt very much whether they are really in a state of favour with God, because they are so unworthy, and have done so much to provoke God to anger against them. Their doubts in such a case arise from unbelief, as they arise from want of a sufficient sense of, and reliance on the infinite riches of God's grace, and the sufficiency of Christ for the chief of sinners. They may also be from unbelief when they doubt of their state, because of the mystery of God's dealings with them: they are not able to reconcile such dispensations with God's favour to them; or when they doubt whether they have any interest in the promises, because the promises, from the aspect of providence, appear so unlikely to be fulfilled,—the difficulties that are in the way are so many and great. Such doubting arises from want of dependence upon God's almighty power, and his knowledge and wisdom, as infinitely above theirs. But yet, their unbelief, and their doubting of their state, are not the same thing; though the one arises from the other.

Persons may be greatly to blame for doubting of their state, on such grounds as these last mentioned; and they may be to blame, that they have no more grace, and no more of the present exercises and experiences of it, to be an evidence to them of the goodness of their state: men are doubtless to blame for being in a dead carnal frame; but when they are in such a frame, and have no sensible experience of the exercises of grace, but, on the contrary, are much under the prevalence of their lusts and an unchristian spirit, they are not to blame for doubting of their

state. It is as impossible, in the nature of things, that a holy and Christian hope should be kept alive, in its clearness and strength, in such circumstances, as it is to keep the light in the room, when the candle is put out; or to maintain the bright sunshine in the air, when the sun is gone down. Distant experiences, when darkened by present prevailing lust and corruption, will never keep alive a gracious confidence and assurance; but that sickens and decays as necessarily as a little child by repeated blows on the head with a hammer. Nor is it at all to be lamented, that persons doubt of their state in such circumstances; on the contrary, it is desirable and every way best that they should. It is agreeable to that wise and merciful constitution of things which God hath established, that it should be so. For so hath God contrived and constituted things, in his dispensations towards his own people, that when their love decays, and the exercises of it fail or become weak, fear should arise; for then they need it to restrain them from sin, and to excite them to care for the good of their souls, and so to stir them up to watchfulness and diligence in religion: but God hath so ordered, that when love rises, and is in vigorous exercise, then fear should vanish, and be driven away; for then they need it not, having a higher and more excellent principle in exercise to restrain them from sin, and stir them up to their duty. There are no other principles which human nature is under the influence of, that will ever make men conscientious, but one of these two, *fear* or *love;* and therefore, if one of these should not prevail as the other decayed, God's people, when fallen into dead and carnal frames, when love

is asleep, would be lamentably exposed indeed. And therefore God has wisely ordained, that these two opposite principles of love and fear should rise and fall, like the two opposite scales of a balance; when one rises, the other sinks. As light and darkness necessarily and unavoidably succeed each other—if light prevails, so much does darkness cease, and no more; and if light decays, so much does darkness prevail: so it is in the heart of a child of God; if divine love decays and falls aleep, and lust prevails, the light and joy of hope goes out, and dark fear and doubting arises; and if, on the contrary, divine love prevails, and comes into lively exercise, this brings in the brightness of hope, and drives away black lust, and fear with it. Love is the spirit of adoption, or the childlike principle: if that slumbers, men fall under fear, which is the spirit of bondage, or the servile principle: and so on the contrary. And if it be so that love, or the spirit of adoption, be carried to a great height, it quite drives away all fear, and gives full assurance. Agreeable to that of the apostle, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." These two opposite principles of lust and holy love, bring hope and fear into the hearts of God's children, in proportion as they prevail; that is, when left to their own natural influence, without something adventitious, or accidental, intervening; as the distemper of melancholy, doctrinal ignorance, prejudices of education, wrong instruction, false principles, peculiar temptations, &c.

Fear is cast out by the Spirit of God no other way than by the prevailing of love; nor is it ever

maintained by his Spirit, but when love is asleep. At such a time, in vain is all the saint's self-examinations, and poring on past experience, in order to establish his peace, and get assurance; for it is contrary to the nature of things, as God hath constituted them, that he should have assurance at such a time.

They, therefore, directly thwart God's wise and gracious constitution of things, who exhort others to be confident in their hope, when in dead frames; under a notion of "living by faith, and not by sight, and trusting God in the dark, and living upon Christ, and not upon experiences;" and warn them not to doubt of their good estate, lest they should be guilty of the dreadful sin of unbelief. And it has a direct tendency to establish the most presumptuous hypocrites, and to prevent their ever calling their state in question, how much soever wickedness rages, and reigns in their hearts, and prevails in their lives; under a notion of honouring God, by hoping against hope, and confidently trusting in God, when things look very dark. And, doubtless, vast has been the mischief that has been done this way.

Persons cannot be said to forsake Christ, and live on their experiences of the exercises of grace, merely because they take them and use them as evidences of grace; for there are no other evidences that they can or ought to take. But then may persons be said to live upon their experiences, when they make a righteousness of them; and, instead of keeping their eye on God's glory and Christ's excellency, they turn their eyes off these objects without them, on to themselves, to entertain their minds, by viewing their

own attainments, and high experiences, and the great things they have met with; and are bright and beautiful in their own eyes, and are rich and increased with goods in their own apprehensions, and think that God has as admiring an esteem of them, on the same account, as they have of themselves: this is living on experiences, and not on Christ; and is more abominable in the sight of God, than the gross immoralities of those who make no pretences to religion. But this is a far different thing from a mere improving experiences, as evidences of an interest in a glorious Redeemer.

But to return from this digression, I would mention one thing more under the general head that I am upon.

CHAPTER XII.

Nothing can be certainly concluded concerning the nature of Religious Affections from this, that the outward manifestations of them, and the relation persons give of them, are very affecting and pleasing to the truly godly, and such as greatly gain their charity, and win their hearts.

The true saints have not such a spirit of discerning, that they can certainly determine who are godly, and who are not. For though they know experimentally what true religion is, in the internal exercises of it; yet these are what they can neither feel

nor see in the heart of another.* There is nothing in others that comes within their view, but outward manifestations and appearances; but the Scripture plainly intimates, that this way of judging what is in men by outward appearances, is at best uncertain, and liable to deceit: "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." "He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears."† They commonly are but poor judges, and dangerous counsellors in soul cases, who are quick and peremptory in determining persons' states, vaunting themselves in their extraordinary faculty of discerning and distinguishing in these great affairs; as though all was open and clear to them. They betray one of these three things: either that they have had but little experience; or are persons of a weak judgment; or that they have a great degree of pride and self-confidence, and so ignorant of them-

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* "Men may have the knowledge of their own conversion: the knowledge that other men have of it is uncertain, because no man can look into the heart of another, and see the workings of grace there."—*Stoddard's Nature of Saving Conversion*, Chap. xv. at the beginning.

† "Mr. Stoddard observes, that "all visible signs are common to converted and unconverted men; and a relation of experiences among the rest."—*Appeal to the Learned*, p. 75.

"O how hard is it for the eye of man to discern betwixt chaff and wheat, and how many upright hearts are now censured whom God will clear! how many false hearts are now approved whom God will condemn! Men ordinarily have no convictive proofs, but only probable symptoms; which at most beget but a conjectural knowledge of another's state. And they that shall peremptorily judge either way, may possibly wrong the generation of the upright, or, on the other side, absolve and justify the wicked. And truly, considering what hath been said, it is no wonder that dangerous mistakes are so frequently made in this matter."—*Flavel's Husbandry Spiritualized*, Chap. xii.

selves. Wise and experienced men will proceed with great caution in such an affair.

When there are many probable appearances of piety in others, it is the duty of the saints to receive them cordially into their charity, and to love them and rejoice in them, as their brethren in Christ Jesus. But yet the best of men may be deceived when the appearances seem to them exceeding fair and bright, even so as entirely to gain their charity, and conquer their hearts. It has been a common thing in the church of God, for such bright professors, that are received as eminent saints among the saints, to fall away and come to nothing.* And this we need not wonder at, if we consider what things it has been shown, may appear in men who are altogether graceless. Nothing hinders but that all these things may meet together in men, and yet they be without a spark of grace in their hearts. They may have religious affections of many kinds together; they may have a sort of affection towards God, that bears a

* "Be not offended if you see great cedars fall, stars fall from heaven, great professors die and decay: do not think they be all such: do not think that the elect shall fall. Truly some are such, that when they fall, one might think a man truly sanctified might fall away, as the Arminians think: 1 John ii. 19. 'They were not of us.' I speak this, because the Lord is shaking: and I look for great apostacies; for God is trying all his friends, through all the Christian world. In Germany, what profession was there! who would have thought it? The Lord, who delights to manifest that openly which was hid secretly, sends a sword, and they fall."—*Shepard's Parab.* Part I. p. 118.

"The saints may approve thee, and God condemn thee: Rev. iii. 1. 'Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.' Men may say, There is a true Nathanael, and God may say, There is a self-cozening Pharisee. Reader, thou hast heard of Judas and Demas, of Ananias and Sapphira, of Hymeneus and Philetus, once renowned and famous professors, and thou hast heard how they proved at last."—*Flavel's Touchstone of Sincerity*, Chap. ii. sect. 5.

great resemblance of dear love to him; and so a kind of love to the brethren, and great appearances of admiration of God's perfections and works, and sorrow for sin, and reverence, submission, self-abasement, gratitude, joy, religious longings, and zeal for the interest of religion and the good of souls. And these affections may come after great awakenings and convictions of conscience; and there may be great appearances of a work of humiliation; and counterfeit love and joy, and other affections may seem to follow these, and one another, just in the same order that is commonly observable in the holy affections of true converts. And these religious affections may be carried to a great height, and may cause abundance of tears, yea, may overcome the nature of those who are the subjects of them, and may make them affectionate, and fervent, and fluent in speaking of the things of God, and dispose them to be abundant in it; and may be attended with many sweet texts of Scripture, and precious promises, brought with great impression on their minds; and may dispose them with their mouths to praise and glorify God, in a very ardent manner, and fervently to call upon others to praise him, crying out of their unworthiness, and extolling free grace. And may, moreover, dispose them to abound in the external duties of religion, such as prayer, hearing the word preached, singing, and religious conference; and these things, attended with a great resemblance of a Christian assurance, in its greatest height, when the saints mount on eagles' wings, above all darkness and doubting. I think it has been made plain, that there may be all these things, and yet there be nothing more than the com-

mon influences of the Spirit of God, joined with the delusions of Satan, and the wicked and deceitful heart. To which I may add, that all these things may be attended with a sweet natural temper, and a good doctrinal knowledge of religion, and a long acquaintance with the saints' way of talking, and of expressing their affections and experiences, and a natural ability and subtilty in accommodating their expressions and manner of speaking to the dispositions and notions of the hearers, and a taking decency of expression and behaviour, formed by a good education. How great therefore may the resemblance be, as to all outward expressions and appearances between a hypocrite and a true saint! Doubtless it is the glorious prerogative of the omniscient God, as the great Searcher of hearts, to be able well to separate between sheep and goats. And what an indecent self-exaltation and arrogance is it, in poor, fallible, dark mortals, to pretend that they can determine and know, who are really sincere and upright before God, and who are not!

Many seem to lay great weight on that, and to suppose it to be what may determine them with respect to others' real piety, when they not only tell a plausible story, but when, in giving an account of their experiences, they make such a representation, and speak after such a manner, that they feel their talk; that is to say, when their talk seems to harmonize with their own experience, and their hearts are touched, and affected, and delighted, by what they hear them say, and drawn out by it in dear love to them. But there is not that certainty in such things, and that full dependence to be had upon them, which

many imagine. A true saint greatly delights in holiness: it is a most beautiful thing in his eyes; and God's work, in savingly renewing, and making holy and happy, a poor, and before perishing soul, appears to him a most glorious work: no wonder, therefore, that his heart is touched and greatly affected, when he hears another give a probable account of this work wrought on his own heart, and when he sees in him probable appearances of holiness; whether those pleasing appearances have any thing real to answer them or not. And if he uses the same words which are commonly made use of, to express the affections of true saints, and tells of many things following one another in an order, agreeable to the method of the experience of him that hears him, and also speaks freely and boldly, and with an air of assurance; no wonder that the other thinks his experiences harmonize with his own. And if, besides all this, in giving his relation, he speaks with much affection; and above all, if in speaking he seems to show much affection to him to whom he speaks—such an affection as the Galatians did to the apostle Paul; these things will naturally have a powerful influence to affect and draw his hearer's heart, and open wide the doors of his charity towards him. David speaks as one who had felt Ahithophel's talk, and had once a sweet savour and relish of it; and therefore, exceedingly great was his surprise and disappointment when he fell; it was almost too much for him: "It was not an enemy—then I could have borne it: but it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance: we took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company."

It is with professors of religion, especially such as become so in a time of out-pouring of the Spirit of God, as it is with the blossoms in the spring:* there are vast numbers of them upon the trees, which all look fair and promising; but yet very many of them never come to any thing. And many of those, that in a little time wither up, and drop off, and rot under the trees; yet for a while look as beautiful and gay as others: and not only so, but smell sweet, and send forth a pleasant odour; so that we cannot, by any of our senses, certainly distinguish those blossoms which have in them that secret virtue which will afterwards appear in the fruit, and that inward solidity and strength which shall enable them to bear, and cause them to be perfected by, the hot summer sun, that will dry up the others. It is the mature fruit which comes afterwards, and not the beautiful colours and smell of the blossom, that we must judge by. So new converts, (professedly so,) in their talk about things of religion, may appear fair, and be very savoury, and the saints may think they talk feelingly. They may relish their talk, and imagine they perceive a divine savour in it; and yet all may come to nothing.

It is strange how hardly men are brought to be contented with the rules and directions Christ has given them, but they must needs go by other rules of their own inventing, that seem to them wiser and better. I know of no directions or counsels which

* A time of out-pouring of the Spirit of God, reviving religion, and producing the pleasant appearances of it in new converts, is in Scripture compared to this very thing, namely, the spring season, when the benign influences of the heavens cause the blossoms to put forth. Cant. ii. 11, 12.

Christ ever delivered more plainly, than the rules he has given us to guide us in our judging of others' sincerity; namely, that we should judge of the tree chiefly by the fruit: but yet this will not do; but other ways are found out, which are imagined to be more distinguishing and certain. And woful have been the mischievous consequences of this arrogant setting up men's wisdom above the wisdom of Christ. I believe many saints have gone much out of the way of Christ's word in this respect; and some of them have been chastised with whips, and (I had almost said) scorpions, to bring them back again. But many things which have lately appeared, and do now appear, may convince that ordinarily those who have been most highly conceited of their faculty of discerning, and have appeared most forward, peremptorily and suddenly to determine the state of men's souls, have been hypocrites, who have known nothing of true religion.

In the parable of the wheat and tares, it is said, "When the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also;" as though the tares were not discerned, nor distinguishable from the wheat, until then, as Mr. Flavel observes; who mentions it as an observation of Jerome's, that "wheat and tares are so much alike, until the blade of the wheat comes to bring forth the ear, that it is next to impossible to distinguish them." And then, Mr. Flavel adds, "How difficult soever it be to discern the difference between wheat and tares; yet, doubtless, the eye of sense can much easier discriminate them, than the most quick and piercing eye of man can discern the difference between special and com-

mon grace. For all saving graces in the saints have their counterfeits in hypocrites; there are similar works in those, which a spiritual and very judicious eye may easily mistake for the saving and genuine effects of a sanctifying spirit."

As it is the ear of the fruit which distinguishes the wheat from the tares, so this is the true Shibboleth, that he who stands as judge at the passages of Jordan, makes use of to distinguish those that shall pass over Jordan into the true Canaan, from those that should be slain at the passages. For the Hebrew word *Shibboleth*, signifies an ear of corn. And perhaps the more full pronunciation of Jephthah's friends, Shibboleth, may represent a full ear, with fruit in it, typifying the fruits of the friends of Christ, the antitype of Jephthah; and the more lean pronunciation of the Ephramites, his enemies, may represent their empty ears, typifying the show of religion in hypocrites, without substance and fruit. This is agreeable to the doctrine we are abundantly taught in Scripture; namely, that he who is set to judge those who pass through death, whether they have a right to enter into the heavenly Canaan or not, or whether they should not be slain, will judge every man according to his works.

We seem to be taught the same things, by the rules given for the priest's discerning the leprosy. In many cases, it was impossible for the priest to determine whether a man had the leprosy, or whether he were clean, by the most narrow inspection of the appearances that were upon him, until he had waited to see what the appearances would come to, and had shut up the persons who showed himself to him, one

seven days after another; and when he judged, he was to determine by the hair which grew out of the spot which was shown him; which was, as it were, the fruit that it brought forth.

And here, before I finish what I have to say under this head, I would say something to a strange notion some have of late been led away with, of certainly knowing the good estate that others are in, as though it were immediately revealed to them from heaven, by their love flowing out to them in an extraordinary manner. They argue thus: That their love being very sensible and great, it may be certainly known by them who feel it, to be a true Christian love; and if it be a true Christian love, the Spirit of God must be the author of it: and inasmuch as the Spirit of God, who knows certainly whether others are the children of God or not, and is a Spirit of truth, is pleased, by an uncommon influence upon them, to cause their love to flow out in an extraordinary manner, towards such a person, as a child of God; it must needs be, that this infallible Spirit, who deceives none, knows that that person is a child of God. But such persons might be convinced of the falseness of their reasoning, if they would consider whether or not it be their duty, and what God requires of them, to love those as the children of God, who think they are the children of God, and whom they have no reason to think otherwise of, from all that they can see in them; though God, who searches the hearts, knows them not to be his children. If it be their duty, then it is good, and the want of it sin; and therefore, surely the Spirit of God may be the author of it: the Spirit of God,

without being a Spirit of falsehood, may in such a case assist a person to do his duty, and keep him from sin. But then they argue from the uncommon degree, and special manner, in which their love flows out to the person, which they think the Spirit of God never would cause, if he did not know the object to be a child of God. But then I would ask them, whether or not it is not their duty to love all such as they are bound to think are the children of God, from all that they can see in them, to a very great degree, though God, from other things which he sees, that are out of their sight, knows them not to be so. It is men's duty to love all whom they are bound in charity to look upon as the children of God, with a vastly dearer affection than they commonly do. As we ought to love Christ to the utmost capacity of our nature, so it is our duty to love those who we think are so near and dear to him as his members, with an exceedingly dear affection, as Christ has loved us; and therefore it is sin in us, not to love them so. We ought to pray to God, that he would by his Spirit keep us from sin, and enable us to do our duty: and may not his Spirit answer our prayers, and enable us to do our duty, in a particular instance, without lying? If he cannot, then the Spirit of God is bound not to help his people to do their duty in some instances, because he cannot do it without being a Spirit of falsehood. But surely God is so sovereign, that he may enable us to do our duty when he pleases, and on what occasion he pleases. When persons think others are his children, God may have other ends in causing their exceedingly endeared love to flow out to them,

besides revealing to them whether their opinion of them be right or not: he may have that merciful end in it, to enable them to do their duty, and to keep them from that dreadful infinite evil, sin. And will they say God shall not show them that mercy in such a case? If I am at a distance from home, and hear, that in my absence my house is burnt, but my family have, in some extraordinary manner, all escaped the flames; and every thing in the circumstances of the story, as I hear it, makes it appear very credible; it would be sin in me, in such a case, not to feel a very great degree of gratitude to God, though the story indeed be not true. And is not God so sovereign, that he may, if he pleases, show me that mercy on that occasion, and enable me to do my duty in a much further degree than I used to do it, and yet not incur the charge of deceitfulness, in confirming a falsehood?

It is exceedingly manifest, that error or mistake may be the occasion of a gracious exercise, and consequently a gracious influence of the Spirit of God. "He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks!" The apostle is speaking of those who, through erroneous and needless scruples, avoided eating legally unclean meats. By this it is very evident, that there may be true exercises of grace, a true respect to the Lord, and particularly, a true thankfulness, which may be occasioned, both by an erroneous judgment and practice. And consequently, an error may be the occasion of those truly holy exercises that are from the infallible Spirit of God. And if so, it is certainly

too much for us to determine, to how great a degree the Spirit of God may give this holy exercise, on such an occasion.

This notion of certainly discerning another's state by love flowing out, is not only not founded on reason or Scripture, but it is anti-scriptural, it is against the rules of Scripture, which say not a word of any such way of judging the state of others as this, but direct us to judge chiefly by the fruits that are seen in them. And it is against the doctrines of Scripture, which do plainly teach us, that the state of others' souls towards God cannot be known by us: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna; and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." "He is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." That by this last expression, "whose praise is not of men, but of God," the apostle has respect to the insufficiency of men to judge concerning him, whether he be inwardly a Jew or not, (as they could easily see by outward marks, whether men were outwardly Jews,) and would signify, that it belongs to God alone to give a determining voice in this matter, is confirmed by the same apostle's use of the phrase, "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God." The apostle, in the two foregoing verses, (1 Cor. iv. 3, 4.) says, "But with

me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self; for I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord." And again, it is further confirmed, because the apostle, in his second chapter to the Romans, directs his speech especially to those who had a high conceit of their own holiness, made their boast of God, and were confident of their own discerning, and that they knew God's will, and approved the things which were excellent, (or, tried the things that differ, as it is in the margin); and were confident that they were guides of the blind, and a light to them which are in darkness, instructors of the foolish, teachers of babes; and so took upon them to judge others.

And how arrogant must the notion be, which they have, who imagine they can certainly know others' godliness, when that great apostle Peter pretends not to say any more concerning Silvanus, than that he was a faithful brother, as he supposed? though this Silvanus appears to have been a very eminent minister of Christ, and an evangelist, and a famous light in God's church at that day, and an intimate companion of the apostles.—See 2 Cor. i. 19. 1 Thess. i. 1. and 2 Thess. i. 1.

PART III.

SHOWING WHAT ARE DISTINGUISHING SIGNS OF TRULY GRACIOUS AND HOLY AFFECTIONS.

A

TREATISE

CONCERNING

RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS.

PART III.

SHOWING WHAT ARE DISTINGUISHING SIGNS OF TRULY GRACIOUS AND HOLY AFFECTIONS.

I COME now to the second thing appertaining to the trial of religious affections, which was proposed,—namely, To take notice of some things, wherein those affections that are spiritual and gracious do differ from those that are not so.

But before I proceed directly to the distinguishing characters, I would previously mention some things which I desire may be observed, concerning the marks I shall lay down.

1. I am far from undertaking to give such signs of gracious affections, as shall be sufficient to enable any certainly to distinguish true affections from false in others; or to determine positively which of their neighbours are true professors, and which are hypocrites. In so doing, I should be guilty of that arrogance which I have been condemning. Though it be plain that Christ has given rules to all Christians, to enable them to judge of professors of religion, with

whom they are concerned, so far as is necessary for their own safety, and to prevent their being led into a snare by false teachers, and false pretenders to religion; and though it be also beyond doubt, that the Scriptures do abound with rules, which may be very serviceable to ministers, in counselling and conducting souls committed to their care, in things appertaining to their spiritual and eternal state; yet it is also evident, that it was never God's design to give us any rules, by which we may certainly know, who of our fellow-professors are his, and to make a full and clear separation between sheep and goats; but that, on the contrary, it was God's design to reserve this to himself, as his prerogative. And therefore no such distinguishing signs as shall enable Christians or ministers to do this, are ever to be expected to the world's end: for no more is ever to be expected from any signs that are to be found in the word of God, than Christ designed them for.

2. No such things are to be expected, as shall be sufficient to enable those saints certainly to discern their own good estate, who are very low in grace, or such as have much departed from God, and are fallen into a dead, carnal, and unchristian frame. It is not agreeable to God's design, (as has been already observed,) that such should know their good estate: nor is it desirable that they should; but, on the contrary, every way best that they should not; and we have reason to bless God, that he has made no provision that such should certainly know the state they are in, any other way than by first coming out of the ill frame and way they are in.

Indeed, it is not properly through the defect of

the signs given in the word of God, that every saint living, whether strong or weak, and those who are in a bad frame, as well as others, cannot certainly know their good estate by them. For the rules in themselves are certain and infallible, and every saint has, or has had those things in himself, which are sure evidences of grace; for every, even the least act of grace is so. But it is through his defect to whom the signs are given. There is a twofold defect in that saint who is very low in grace, or in an ill frame, which makes it impossible for him to know certainly that he has true grace, by the best signs and rules which can be given him.

1st, A defect in the object, or the qualification to be viewed and examined. I do not mean an essential defect, because I suppose the person to be a real saint; but a defect in degree: grace being very small, cannot be clearly and certainly discerned and distinguished.

Things that are very small, we cannot clearly discern their form, or distinguish them one from another; though in themselves their form may be very different. There is doubtless a great difference between the body of man and the bodies of other animals, in the first conception in the womb: but yet if we should view the different embryos, it might not be possible for us to discern the difference, by reason of the imperfect state of the object; but as it comes to greater perfection, the difference becomes very plain. The difference between creatures of very contrary qualities, is not so plainly to be seen while they are very young, as in their more perfect state. The difference between doves and ravens, or doves

and vultures, when they first come out of the egg, is not so evident; but as they grow to their perfection, it is exceedingly great and manifest. Another defect attending the grace of those I am speaking of, is its being mingled with so much corruption, which clouds and hides it, and makes it impossible for it certainly to be known. Though different things that are before us, may have in themselves many marks thoroughly distinguishing them one from another; yet if we see them only in a thick smoke, it may nevertheless be impossible to distinguish them. A fixed star is easily distinguishable from a comet, in a clear sky; but if we view them through a cloud, it may be impossible to see the difference. When true Christians are in an ill frame, guilt lies on the conscience; which will bring fear, and so prevent the peace and joy of an assured hope.

2d, There is in such a case a defect in the eye. As the feebleness of grace and prevalence of corruption obscures the object, so it enfeebles the sight: it darkens the sight as to spiritual objects, of which grace is one. Sin is like some distempers of the eyes, that make things to appear of different colours from those which properly belong to them, and like many other distempers, that put the mouth out of taste, so as to disenable from distinguishing good and wholesome food from bad, and makes every thing taste bitter. Men in a corrupt and carnal frame, have their spiritual senses in but poor plight for judging and distinguishing spiritual things.

For these reasons, no signs that can be given, will actually satisfy persons in such a case: let the signs that are given be ever so good and infallible, and

clearly laid down, they will not serve them. It is like giving a man rules how to distinguish visible objects in the dark: the things themselves may be very different, and their difference may be very well and distinctly described to him; yet all is insufficient to enable him to distinguish them, because he is in the dark. And therefore, many persons in such a case spend time in a fruitless labour, in poring on past experiences, and examining themselves by signs they hear laid down from the pulpit, or that they read in books, when there is other work for them to do, that is much more expected of them; which while they neglect, all their self-examinations are in vain. The accursed thing is to be destroyed from their camp, and Achan to be slain; and until this be done they will be in trouble. It is not God's design that men should obtain assurance in any other way than by mortifying corruption, and increasing in grace, and obtaining the lively exercises of it. And although self-examination be a duty of great use and importance, and by no means to be neglected; yet it is not the principal means by which the saints get satisfaction of their good estate. Assurance is not to be obtained so much by *self-examination*, as by *action*. The apostle Paul sought assurance chiefly this way, even by "forgetting the things that were behind, and reaching forth unto those things that were before, pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." And it was by this means chiefly that he obtained assurance: "I therefore so run as not uncertainly." He obtained assurance of winning the prize, more by

running than by considering. The swiftness of his pace, did more towards his assurance of a conquest, than the strictness of his examination. Giving all diligence to grow in grace, by adding to faith virtue, &c. is the direction that the apostle Peter gives us, for " making our calling and election sure, and having an entrance ministered unto us abundantly, into Christ's everlasting kingdom;" signifying to us, that without this, our eyes will be dim, and we shall be as men in the dark, that cannot plainly see things past or to come, either the forgiveness of our sins past, or our heavenly inheritance that is future and far off.*

Therefore, though good rules to distinguish true grace from counterfeit, may tend to convince hypocrites, and, in many respects, be of great use to the saints; and may be very useful to them to remove many needless scruples, and establish their hope; yet I am far from pretending to lay down any such rules, as shall be sufficient of themselves, without other means, to enable all true saints to see their good estate, or from supposing they should be the principal means of their satisfaction.

3. Nor is there much encouragement, in the experience of present or past times, to lay down rules or marks to distinguish between true and false affec-

* " The way to know your godliness, is to renew the visible exercises of grace.—The more the visible exercises of grace are renewed, the more certain you will be. The more frequently these actings are renewed, the more abiding and confirmed your assurance will be. The more men's grace is multiplied, the more their peace is multiplied: ' Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ our Lord.' "—*Stoddard's Way to know Sincerity and Hypocrisy*, pp. 139, 142.

tions, in hopes of convincing any considerable number of such hypocrites, as have been deceived with great false discoveries and affections, and are once settled in a false confidence, and high conceit of their own supposed great experiences and privileges. Such hypocrites are so conceited of their own wisdom, and so blinded and hardened with a very great self-righteousness, (but very subtle and secret, under the disguise of great humility,) and so invincible a fondness of their pleasing conceit, of their great exaltation, that it usually signifies nothing at all to lay before them the most convincing evidences of their hypocrisy. Their state is indeed deplorable, and next to those that have committed the unpardonable sin. Some of this sort of persons seem to be most out of the reach of means of conviction and repentance. But yet the laying down of good rules may be a means of preventing such hypocrites, and of convincing other kinds of hypocrites: and God is able to convince even this kind, and his grace is not to be limited, nor means to be neglected. Besides, such rules may be of use to the true saints, to detect false affections which they may have mingled with true; and be a means of their religion becoming more pure, and like gold tried in the fire.

Having premised these things, I now proceed directly to take notice of those things in which true religious affections are distinguished from false.

CHAPTER I.

Affections that are truly Spiritual and Gracious, arise from those Influences and Operations on the Heart, which are Spiritual, Supernatural, and Divine.

I WILL explain what I mean by these terms, whence will appear their use to distinguish between those affections which are spiritual, and those which are not so.

We find that true saints, or those persons who are sanctified by the Spirit of God, are in the New Testament called spiritual persons. And their being spiritual is spoken of as their peculiar character, and that wherein they are distinguished from those who are not sanctified. This is evident, because those who are spiritual are set in opposition to natural men, and carnal men. Thus the spiritual man and the natural man are set in opposition to one another: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things." The scripture explains itself to mean an ungodly man, or one that has no grace, by a "natural man:" thus the apostle Jude, speaking of certain ungodly men, that had crept in unawares among the saints, says, "These are sensual, having not the Spirit." This the apostle gives as a reason why they behaved themselves in such a wicked manner as

he had described. Here the word translated *sensual*, in the original is ψυχικοι; which is the very same, which, in those verses in 1 Cor. ii., is translated *natural*. In the like manner, in the continuation of the same discourse, in the next verse but one, spiritual men are opposed to carnal men; which the connection plainly shows mean the same as spiritual men and natural men, in the foregoing verses: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal;" that is, as in a great measure unsanctified. That by *carnal* the apostle means corrupt and unsanctified, is abundantly evident, by Rom. vii. 25. and viii. 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13. Gal. v. 16. to the end. Col. ii. 18. Now, therefore, if by natural and carnal, in these texts, he intended unsanctified, then doubtless by spiritual, which is opposed thereto, is meant sanctified and gracious.

And as the saints are called spiritual in Scripture, so we also find that there are certain properties, qualities, and principles, that have the same epithet given them. So we read of a "spiritual mind," and of "spiritual wisdom," and of "spiritual blessings."

Now it may be observed, that the epithet "spiritual," in these and other parallel texts of the New Testament, is not used to signify any relation of persons or things to the spirit or soul of man, as the spiritual part of man in opposition to the body, which is the material part. Qualities are not said to be spiritual, because they have their seat in the soul, and not in the body; for there are some properties that the Scripture calls *carnal*, or *fleshly*, which have their seat as much in the soul, as those properties that are called *spiritual*. Thus it is with pride and self-

righteousness, and a man trusting to his own wisdom, which the apostle calls *fleshly*. Nor are things called spiritual, because they are conversant about those things that are immaterial, and not corporeal. For so was the wisdom of the wise men, and princes of this world, conversant about spirits, and immaterial beings; which yet the apostle speaks of as natural men, totally ignorant of those things that are spiritual. But it is with relation to the Holy Ghost, or Spirit of God, that persons or things are termed spiritual in the New Testament.—Spirit, as the word is used to signify the third person in the Trinity, is the substantive, of which is formed the adjective spiritual, in the holy Scriptures. Thus Christians are called spiritual persons, because they are born of the Spirit, and because of the indwelling and holy influences of the Spirit of God in them. And things are called spiritual as related to the Spirit of God: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." Here the apostle himself expressly signifies, that by spiritual things, he means the things of the Spirit of God, and things which the Holy Ghost teacheth. The same is yet more abundantly apparent by viewing the whole contexts. Again, "To be carnally minded is death; to be spiritually minded is life and peace." The apostle explains what he means by being carnally and spiritually minded, in what follows, and shows that by being spiritually minded, he means a having the indwelling and holy influences of the Spirit of

God in the heart. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." The same is evident by all the context. But time would fail to produce all the evidence there is of this in the New Testament.

And it must be here observed, that although it is with relation to the Spirit of God, and his influences, that persons and things are called spiritual; yet not all those persons who are subject to any kind of influence of the Spirit of God, are ordinarily called spiritual in the New Testament. They who have only the common influences of God's Spirit, are not so called in the places cited above, but only those who have special, gracious, and saving influences of God's Spirit; as is evident, because it has been already proved, that by spiritual men is meant godly men, in opposition to natural, carnal, and unsanctified men. And it is most plain, that the apostle by "spiritually minded," Rom. viii. 6. means graciously minded. And though the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, which natural men might have, are sometimes called spiritual, because they are from the Spirit; yet natural men, whatever gifts of the Spirit they had, were not, in the usual language of the New Testament, called spiritual persons. For it was not by men's having the gifts of the Spirit, but by their having the virtues of the Spirit, that they were called spiritual; as is apparent: "Brethren, if any man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness." Meekness is one of those virtues which the apostle had just spoken of, in the verses next preceding, showing what are the fruits

of the Spirit. Those qualifications are said to be spiritual in the language of the New Testament, which are truly gracious and holy, and peculiar to the saints.

Thus, when we read of spiritual wisdom and understanding—"We desire that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;" hereby is intended that wisdom which is gracious, and from the sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God. For doubtless, by spiritual wisdom is meant that which is opposite to what the Scripture calls natural wisdom; as the spiritual man is opposed to the natural man. And therefore spiritual wisdom is doubtless the same with that wisdom which is from above, that the apostle James speaks of: "The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle," &c. for this the apostle opposes to natural wisdom: "This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual." The last word in the original is the same that is translated *natural*, in 1 Cor. ii. 14.

So that although natural men may be the subjects of many influences of the Spirit of God, as is evident by many Scriptures,* yet they are not, in the sense of the Scripture, spiritual persons: neither are any of those effects common gifts, qualities, or affections, that are from the influence of the Spirit of God upon them, called spiritual things. The great difference lies in these two things:—

1. The Spirit of God is given to the true saints

* Numb. xxiv. 2. 1 Sam. x. 10. and xi. 6. and xvi. 14. 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3. Heb. vi. 4—6.

to dwell in them, as his proper lasting abode; and to influence their hearts, as a principle of new nature, or as a divine supernatural spring of life and action. The Scriptures represent the Holy Spirit not only as moving, and occasionally influencing the Saints, but his dwelling in them as his temple, his proper abode, and everlasting dwelling-place.* And he is represented as being there so united to the faculties of the soul, that he becomes there a principle or spring of new nature and life.

The saints are said to live by Christ living in them. Christ by his Spirit not only *is* in them, but *lives* in them; and as they live by his life, so is his Spirit united to them, as a principle of life in them; they do not only drink living water, but this "living water becomes a well or fountain of water" in the soul, "springing up into spiritual and everlasting life," and thus becomes a principle of life in them. This living water, this evangelist himself explains to intend the Spirit of God. The light of the Sun of Righteousness not only shines upon them, but is so communicated to them that they shine also, and become little images of that Sun which shines upon them; the sap of the true vine is not only conveyed into them, as the sap of a tree may be conveyed into a vessel, but is conveyed as sap is from a tree into one of its living branches, where it becomes a principle of life. The Spirit of God being thus communicated and united to the saints, they are from thence properly denominated from it, and are called *spiritual.*

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* 1 Cor. iii. 16. 2 Cor. vi. 16. John xiv. 16, 17.

On the other hand, though the Spirit of God may many ways influence natural men; yet because it is not thus communicated to them as an indwelling principle, they do not derive any denomination or character from it; for there being no union, it is not their own. The light may shine upon a body that is very dark or black, and though that body be the subject of the light, yet, because the light becomes no principle of light in it, so as to cause the body to shine, that body does not properly receive its denomination from it so as to be called a lightsome body. So the Spirit of God acting upon the soul only, without communicating itself to be an active principle in it, cannot denominate it spiritual. A body that continues black, may be said not to have light, though the light shines upon it: so natural men are said not to have the Spirit, Jude 19. "sensual," or natural, (as the word is elsewhere rendered,) "having not the Spirit."

2. Another reason why the saints and their virtues are called spiritual, (which is the principal thing,) is, that the Spirit of God, dwelling as a vital principle in their souls, there produces those effects wherein he exerts and communicates himself in his own proper nature. Holiness is the nature of the Spirit of God, therefore he is called in Scripture the Holy Ghost. Holiness, which is, as it were, the beauty and sweetness of the divine nature, is as much the proper nature of the Holy Spirit, as heat is the nature of fire, or sweetness was the nature of that holy anointing oil, which was the principal type of the Holy Ghost in the Mosaic dispensation; yea, I may rather say, that holiness is as much the proper nature

of the Holy Ghost, as sweetness was the nature of the sweet odour of that ointment. The Spirit of God so dwells in the hearts of the saints, that he there, as a seed or spring of life, exerts and communicates himself, in this his sweet and divine nature, making the soul a partaker of God's beauty and Christ's joy, so that the saint has truly fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, in thus having the communion or participation of the Holy Ghost. The grace which is in the hearts of the saints, is of the same nature with the divine holiness, as much as it is possible for that holiness to be, which is infinitely less in degree: as the brightness that is in a diamond upon which the sun shines, is of the same nature with the brightness of the sun, but only that it is as nothing to it in degree. Therefore Christ says, "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit;" that is, the grace that is begotten in the hearts of the saints, is something of the same nature with that Spirit, and so is properly called a spiritual nature; after the same manner as that which is born of the flesh is flesh, or that which is born of corrupt nature is corrupt nature.

But the Spirit of God never influences the minds of natural men after this manner. Though he may influence them many ways, yet he never, in any of his influences, communicates himself to them in his own proper nature. Indeed, he never acts disagreeably to his nature, either on the minds of saints or sinners: but the Spirit of God may act upon men agreeably to his own nature, and not exert his proper nature in the acts and exercises of their minds: the Spirit of God may act so, that his actions may be

agreeable to his nature, and yet may not at all communicate himself in his proper nature, in the effect of that action. Thus, for instance, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and there was nothing disagreeable to his nature in that action; but yet he did not at all communicate himself in that action, there was nothing of the proper nature of the Holy Spirit in that motion of the waters. And so he may act upon the minds of men many ways, and not communicate himself any more than when he acts on inanimate things.

Thus, not only the manner of the relation of the Spirit who is the operator, to the subject of his operations, is different,—as the Spirit operates in the saints, as dwelling in them, as an abiding principle of action, whereas he doth not so operate upon sinners,—but the influence and operation itself is different, and the effect wrought exceeding different. So that not only the persons are called *spiritual*, as having the Spirit of God dwelling in them; but those qualifications, affections, and experiences that are wrought in them by the Spirit, are also *spiritual*, and therein differ vastly in their nature and kind from all that a natural man is or can be the subject of, while he remains in a natural state: and also from all that men or devils can be the authors of. It is a spiritual work in this high sense; and therefore above all other works is peculiar to the Spirit of God. There is no work so high and excellent; for there is no work wherein God doth so much communicate himself, and wherein the mere creature hath, in so high a sense, a participation of God; so that it is expressed in Scripture by the saints "being made

partakers of the divine nature," and "having God dwelling in them, and they in God," and "having Christ in them," "being the temples of the living God," "living by Christ's life," "being made partakers of God's holiness," "having Christ's love dwelling in them," "seeing light in God's light, and being made to drink of the rivers of God's pleasures," "having fellowship with God," or communicating and partaking with him, (as the word signifies.) Not that the saints are made partakers of the essence of God, and so are *godded* with God, and *christed* with Christ, according to the abominable and blasphemous language and notions of some heretics; but to use the Scripture phrase, they are made partakers of God's fulness, that is, of God's spiritual beauty and happiness, according to the measure and capacity of a creature; for so it is evident the word *fulness* signifies in Scripture language. Grace in the hearts of the saints, being therefore the most glorious work of God, wherein he communicates of the goodness of his nature, it is doubtless his peculiar work, and in an eminent manner, above the power of all creatures. And the influences of the Spirit of God in this, being thus peculiar to God, and being those wherein God does, in so high a manner, communicate himself, and make the creature partaker of the divine nature, (the Spirit of God communicating itself in its own proper nature;) this is what I mean by those influences that are divine, when I say, that "truly gracious affections do arise from those influences that are spiritual and divine."

The true saints only have that which is spiritual; others have nothing which is divine, in the sense

that has been spoken of. They not only have not these communications of the Spirit of God in so high a degree as the saints, but have nothing of that nature or kind. For the apostle James tell us, that natural men have not the Spirit; and Christ teaches the necessity of a new birth, or of being born of the Spirit, from this, that he that is born of the flesh, has only flesh, and no spirit. They have not the Spirit of God dwelling in them in any degree; for the apostle teaches, that all who have the Spirit of God dwelling in them are some of his.* And a having the Spirit of God, is spoken of as a certain sign that persons shall have the eternal inheritance; for it is spoken of as the earnest of it;† and a having any thing of the Spirit is mentioned as a sure sign of being in Christ: "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, because he hath given us of his Spirit." Ungodly men, not only have not so much of the divine nature as the saints, but they are not partakers of it; which implies that they have nothing of it; for a being "partaker of the divine nature," is spoken of as the peculiar privilege of the true saints. Ungodly men are not partakers of God's holiness. A natural man has no experience of any of those things that are spiritual: the apostle teaches us, that he is so far from it, that he knows nothing about them, he is a perfect stranger to them, the talk about such things is all foolishness and nonsense to him, he knows not what it means: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him; neither can

* Rom. viii. 9—11. † 2 Cor. i. 22. and v. 5. Eph. i. 14.

he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." And to the like purpose Christ teaches us that the world is wholly unacquainted with the Spirit of God: "Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him." And it is farther evident, that natural men have nothing in them of the same nature with the true grace of the saints, because the apostle teaches us, that those of them who go farthest in religion, "have not charity," or true Christian love. So Christ elsewhere reproves the Pharisees, those high pretenders to religion, that they "had not the love of God in them." Hence natural men have no communion or fellowship with Christ, or participation with him, (as these words signify,) for this is spoken of as the peculiar privilege of the saints.* And the Scripture speaks of the actual being of a gracious principle in the soul, though in its first beginning, as a seed there planted, as inconsistent with a man's being a sinner.† And natural men are represented in Scripture, as having no spiritual light, no spiritual life, and no spiritual being; and therefore conversion is often compared to opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead, and a work of creation, (wherein creatures are made entirely new,) and becoming new-born children.

From these things it is evident, that those gracious influences of which the saints are the subjects, and the effects of God's Spirit which they experience, are entirely above nature, altogether of a different kind from any thing that men find within themselves

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* 1 John i. 3, 6, 7. 1 Cor. i. 8, 9. † 1 John iii. 9.

by nature, or only in the exercise of natural principles; and are things which no improvement of those qualifications, or principles that are natural, no advancing or exalting them to higher degrees, and no kind of composition of them, will ever bring men to; because they not only differ from what is natural, and from every thing that natural men experience, in degree and circumstances, but also in kind; and are of a nature vastly more excellent. And this is what I mean by supernatural, when I say that gracious affections are from those influences that are supernatural.

From hence it follows, that in those gracious exercises and affections which are wrought in the minds of the saints through the saving influences of the Spirit of God, there is a new inward perception or sensation of their minds, entirely different in its nature and kind, from any thing that ever their minds were the subjects of before they were sanctified. For doubtless if God by his mighty power produces something that is new, not only in degree and circumstances, but in its whole nature, and which could be produced by no exalting, varying, or compounding of what was there before; I say, if God produces something thus new in a mind, that is a perceiving, thinking, conscious thing; then doubtless something entirely new is felt, or perceived, or thought; or, which is the same thing, there is some new sensation or perception of the mind, which is entirely of a new sort, and which could be produced by no exalting, varying, or compounding of that kind of perceptions or sensations which the mind had before; or there is what some metaphysicians call a new simple idea. If grace be, in the sense above described,

an entirely new kind of principle, then the exercises of it are also entirely a new kind of exercises. And if there be in the soul a new sort of exercises, of which it is conscious, which the soul knew nothing of before, and which no improvement, composition, or management, of what it was before conscious or sensible of, could produce; then it follows, that the mind has an entirely new kind of perception or sensation: and here is, as it were, a new spiritual sense that the mind has, or a new principle, perception, or spiritual sensation, which is in its whole nature different from any former kinds of sensation of the mind, as tasting is diverse from any of the other senses; and something is perceived by a true saint, in the exercise of this new sense of mind, in spiritual and divine things, as entirely diverse from any thing that is perceived in them by natural men, as the sweet taste of honey is diverse from the ideas men get of honey by only looking on it, and feeling it. So that the spiritual perceptions which a sanctified and spiritual person has, are not only diverse from all that natural men have, after the manner that the ideas or perceptions of the same sense may differ one from another, but rather as the ideas and sensations of different senses do differ. Hence the work of the Spirit of God in regeneration is often compared to the giving a new sense; giving eyes to see, and ears to hear; unstopping the ears of the deaf; and opening the eyes of them that were born blind; and turning from darkness unto light. And because this spiritual sense is immensely the most noble and excellent, and that without which all other principles of perception, and all our faculties, are useless and

vain; therefore the giving this new sense, with the blessed fruits and effects of it in the soul, is compared to a raising the dead, and to a new creation.

This new spiritual sense, and the new dispositions that attend it, are no new faculties, but are new principles of nature. I use the word *principles*, for want of a word of more determinate signification. By a principle of nature in this place, I mean that foundation which is laid in nature, either old or new, for any particular kind of exercise of the faculties of the soul; or a natural habit, or foundation for action, giving a person ability and disposition to exert the faculties of such a certain kind; so that, to exert the faculties in that kind of exercises, may be said to be his nature. So this new spiritual sense is not a new faculty of understanding, but it is a new foundation laid in the nature of the soul, for a new kind of exercises of the same faculty of understanding. So that new holy disposition of heart that attends this new sense, is not a new faculty of will, but a foundation laid in the nature of the soul, for a new kind of exercises of the same faculty of will.

The Spirit of God, in all his operations upon the minds of natural men, only moves, impresses, assists, improves, or some way acts upon natural principles; but gives no new natural principle. Thus, when the Spirit of God gives a natural man visions, as he did Balaam, he only impresses a natural principle, namely, the sense of seeing, immediately exciting ideas of that sense; but he gives no new sense; neither is there any thing supernatural, spiritual, or divine, in it. So, if the Spirit of God impresses on a man's imagination, either in a dream, or when he is awake, any outward

ideas of any of the senses, either voices, or shapes and colours, it is only exciting ideas of the same kind that he has by natural principles and senses. So, if God reveals to any natural man any secret fact; as, for instance, something that he shall hereafter see or hear; this is not infusing or exercising any new spiritual principle, or giving the ideas of any new spiritual sense; it is only impressing, in an extraordinary manner, the ideas that will hereafter be received by sight and hearing. So, in the more ordinary influences of the Spirit of God on the hearts of sinners, he only assists natural principles to do the same work to a greater degree, which they do of themselves by nature. Thus the Spirit of God, by his common influences, may assist men's natural ingenuity, as he assisted Bezaleel and Aholiab, in the curious works of the tabernacle: so he may assist men's natural abilities in political affairs, and improve their courage, and other natural qualifications; as he is said to have put his Spirit on the seventy elders, and on Saul, so as to give him another heart. So God may greatly assist natural men's reason, in their reasoning about secular things, or about the doctrines of religion, and may greatly advance the clearness of their apprehensions and notions of things of religion in many respects, without giving any spiritual sense. So, in those awakenings and convictions that natural men may have, God only assists conscience, which is a natural principle, to do that work in a further degree, which it naturally does. Conscience naturally gives men an apprehension of right and wrong, and suggests the relation there is between right and wrong, and a retribution; the Spirit of God assists men's

consciences to do this in a greater degree, helps conscience against the stupifying influence of worldly objects, and their lusts. And many other ways might be mentioned, wherein the Spirit acts upon, assists, and moves natural principles; but, after all, it is no more than nature moved, acted, and improved; here is nothing supernatural and divine. But the Spirit of God in his spiritual influences on the hearts of his saints, operates by infusing or exercising new, divine, and supernatural principles; principles which are indeed a new and spiritual nature, and principles vastly more noble and excellent than all that is in natural men.

From what has been said, it follows, that all spiritual and gracious affections are attended with, and do arise from some apprehension, idea, or sensation of mind, which is in its whole nature different, yea exceeding different, from all that is or can be in the mind of a natural man; and of which the natural man discerns nothing, and has no manner of idea; and no more conceives of, than a man without the sense of tasting, can conceive of the sweet taste of honey; or a man without the sense of hearing can conceive of the melody of a tune; or a man born blind can have a notion of the beauty of the rainbow.

But here two things must be observed, in order to the right understanding of this.

1. On the one hand, it must be observed, that not every thing which in any respect appertains to spiritual affections is new and entirely different from what natural men can conceive of, and do experience; some things are common to gracious affections with other affections; many circumstances, appendages, and ef-

fects are common. Thus a saint's love to God has a great many things appertaining to it which are common with a man's natural love to a near relation: love to God makes a man have desires of the honour of God, and a desire to please him; so does a natural man's love to his friend make him desire his honour, and desire to please him; love to God causes a man to delight in the thoughts of God, and to delight in the presence of God, and to desire conformity to God, and the enjoyment of God; and so it is with a man's love to his friend: and many other things might be mentioned which are common to both. But yet that idea which the saint has of the loveliness of God, and that sensation, and kind of delight he has, which is as it were the marrow and quintessence of his love, is peculiar, and entirely diverse from any thing that a natural man has, or can have any notion of. And even in those things that seem to be common, there is something peculiar: both spiritual and natural love cause desires after the object beloved: but they are not the same sort of desires; there is a sensation of soul in the spiritual desires of one that loves God, which is entirely different from all natural desires. Both spiritual love and natural love are attended with delight in the object beloved; but the sensations of delight are not the same, but entirely and exceedingly diverse. Natural men may have conceptions of many things about spiritual affections; but there is something in them which is as it were the nucleus, or kernel of them, that they have no more conception of than one born blind has of colours.

It may be clearly illustrated by this: we will suppose two men; one is born without the sense of tast-

ing, the other has it: the latter loves honey, and is greatly delighted with it, because he knows the sweet taste of it; the other loves certain sounds and colours. The love of each has many things that appertain to it, which is common; it causes both to desire and delight in the object beloved, and causes grief when it is absent, &c. but yet that idea or sensation which he who knows the taste of honey has of its excellency and sweetness, as the foundation of his love, is entirely different from any thing the other has or can have; and that delight which he has in honey is wholly diverse from any thing the other can conceive of, though they both delight in their beloved objects. So both these persons may in some respects love the same object: the one may love a delicious kind of fruit, which is beautiful to the eye, and of a delicious taste; not only because he has seen its pleasant colours, but knows its sweet taste; the other, perfectly ignorant of this, loves it only for its beautiful colours: there are many things seen, in some respect, to be common to both; both love, both desire, and both delight; but the love, and desire, and delight of the one, is altogether diverse from that of the other. The difference between the love of a natural and spiritual man is like to this; but only it must be observed, that in one respect it is vastly greater, namely, that the kinds of excellency which are perceived in spiritual objects, by these different persons, are in themselves vastly more diverse than the different kinds of excellency perceived in delicious fruit, by a tasting and a tasteless man: and in another respect it may not be so great, namely, as the spiritual man may have a spiritual sense or taste to perceive that divine

and most peculiar excellency but in small beginnings, and in a very imperfect degree.

2. On the other hand, it must be observed, that a natural man may have those religious apprehensions and affections, which may be in many respects very new and surprising to him, and what before he did not conceive of, and yet what he experiences be nothing like the exercises of a principle of a new nature, or the sensations of a new spiritual sense. His affections may be very new, by extraordinarily moving natural principles, in a very new degree, and with a great many new circumstances, and a new co-operation of natural affections, and a new composition of ideas. This may be from some extraordinary powerful influence of Satan, and some great delusion; but there is nothing but nature extraordinarily exerted. As if a poor man, that had always dwelt in a cottage, and had never looked beyond the obscure village where he was born, should in a jest be taken to a magnificent city, and prince's court, and there arrayed in princely robes, and set in the throne, with the crown royal on his head, peers and nobles bowing before him; and should be made to believe that he was now a glorious monarch; the ideas he would have, and the affections he would experience, would in many respects be very new, and such as he had no imagination of before; but all is no more, than only extraordinarily raising and exciting natural principles, and newly exalting, varying, and compounding such sort of ideas as he has by nature; here is nothing like giving him a new sense.

Upon the whole, I think it is clearly manifest, that all truly gracious affections do arise from special

and peculiar influences of the Spirit, working that sensible effect or sensation in the souls of the saints, which are entirely different from all that is possible a natural man should experience; not only different in degree and circumstances, but different in its whole nature: so that a natural man not only cannot experience that which is individually the same, but cannot experience any thing but what is exceeding diverse, and immensely below it, in its kind; and that which the power of men or devils is not sufficient to produce the like of, or any thing of the same nature.

I have insisted largely on this matter, because it is of great importance and use evidently to discover and demonstrate the delusions of Satan, in many kinds of false religious affections, by which multitudes are deluded, and probably have been in all ages of the Christian church; and to settle and determine many articles of doctrine, concerning the operations of the Spirit of God, and the nature of true grace.

Now, therefore, to apply these things to the purpose of this discourse.

From hence it appears, that impressions which some have made on their imagination, or the imaginary ideas which they have of God, or Christ, or heaven, or any thing appertaining to religion, have nothing in them that is spiritual, or of the nature of true grace. Though such things may attend what is spiritual, and be mixed with it, yet in themselves they have nothing that is spiritual, nor are they any part of gracious experience.

Here, for the sake of common people, I will explain what is intended by impressions on the imagination, and imaginary ideas. The *imagination* is that

power of the mind whereby it can have a conception, or idea of things of an external nature, (that is, of such sort of things as are the objects of the outward senses,) when those things are not present, and are not perceived by the senses. It is called *imagination* from the word image; because thereby a person can have an image of some external thing in his mind, when that thing is not present in reality, nor any thing like it. All such kind of things as we perceive by our five external senses, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling, are external things: and when a person has an idea, or image, of any of these things in his mind, when they are not there, and when he does not really see, hear, smell, taste, nor feel them, that is to have an imagination of them, and these ideas are imaginary ideas; and when such kind of ideas are strongly impressed upon the mind, and the image of them in the mind is very lively, almost as if one saw them, or heard them, &c. that is called an impression on the imagination. Thus colours, and shapes, and a form of countenance are outward things; because they are that sort of things which are the objects of the outward sense of seeing: and, therefore, when any person has in his mind a lively idea of any shape, or colour, or form of countenance, that is to have an imagination of those things. So if he has an idea of such sort of light or darkness as he perceives by the sense of seeing, that is to have an idea of outward light, and so is an imagination. So if he has an idea of any marks made on paper, suppose letters and words written in a book, that is to have an external and imaginary idea of such kind of things as we sometimes perceive by our bodily eyes. And

when we have the ideas of that kind of things which we perceive by any of the other senses, as of any sounds, or voices, or words spoken, this is only to have ideas of outward things, namely, of such kind of things as are perceived by the external sense of hearing; and so that also is imagination: and when these ideas are livelily impressed, almost as if they were really heard with the ears, this is to have an impression on the imagination. And so I might go on, and instance in the ideas of things appertaining to the other three senses of smelling, tasting, and feeling.

Many who have had such things have very ignorantly supposed them to be of the nature of spiritual discoveries. They have had lively ideas of some external shape, and beautiful form of countenance; and this they call spiritually seeing Christ. Some have had impressed upon them ideas of a great outward light; and this they call a spiritual discovery of God's or Christ's glory. Some have had ideas of Christ's hanging on the cross, and his blood running from his wounds; and this they call a spiritual sight of Christ crucified, and the way of salvation by his blood. Some have seen him with his arms open, ready to embrace them; and this they call a discovery of the sufficiency of Christ's grace and love. Some have had lively ideas of heaven, and of Christ on his throne there, and shining ranks of saints and angels; and this they call seeing heaven opened to them. Some have had a lively idea of a person of a beautiful countenance smiling upon them; and this they call a spiritual discovery of the love of Christ to their souls, and tasting the love of Christ. And they look upon it a sufficient evi-

dence that these things are spiritual discoveries, and that they see them spiritually, because they say they do not see these things with their bodily eyes, but in their hearts; for they can see them when their eyes are shut. And, in like manner, the imaginations of some have been impressed with ideas of the sense of hearing; they have had ideas of words as if they were spoken to them: sometimes they are the words of Scripture, and sometimes other words. They have had ideas of Christ speaking comfortable words to them. These things they have called having the inward call of Christ, hearing the voice of Christ spiritually in their hearts, having the witness of the Spirit, and the inward testimony of the love of Christ, &c.

The common, and less considerate and understanding sort of people, are the more easily led into apprehensions that these things are spiritual things, because spiritual things being invisible, and not things that can be pointed forth with the finger, we are forced to use figurative expressions in speaking of them, and to borrow names from external and sensible objects to signify them by. Thus we call a clear apprehension of things spiritual by the name of *light;* and having such an apprehension of such or such things, by the name of *seeing* such things. The conviction of the judgment and the persuasion of the will, by the word of Christ in the gospel, we signify by *spiritually hearing the call of Christ:* and the Scripture itself abounds with such like figurative expressions. Persons, hearing these often used, and having pressed upon them the necessity of having their eyes opened, and having a discovery of spiritual

things, and seeing Christ in his glory, and having the inward call, and the like, they ignorantly look and wait for some such external discoveries and imaginary views as have been spoken of; and when they have them, are confident that now their eyes are opened, now Christ has discovered himself to them, and they are his children; and hence are exceedingly affected and elevated with their deliverance and happiness, and many kinds of affections are at once set in a violent motion in them.

But it is exceedingly apparent that such ideas have nothing in them that is spiritual and divine, in the sense wherein it has been demonstrated that all gracious experiences are spiritual and divine. These external ideas are not of such a sort, that they are entirely, and in their whole nature, diverse from all that men have by nature, perfectly different from, and vastly above, any sensation which it is possible a man should have by any natural sense or principle, so that to have them, a man must have a new spiritual and divine sense given him, in order to have any sensations of that sort: so far from this, that they are ideas of the same sort with some of the inferior powers of the human nature which we have by the external senses; they are merely ideas of external objects, or ideas of the same outward sensitive kind; the same sort of sensations of mind (differing not in degree, but only in circumstances) that we have by those natural principles, which are common to us with the beast, namely, the five external senses. This is a low, miserable notion of spiritual sense, to suppose that it is only a conceiving, or imagining, that sort of ideas which we have by our animal senses, which

senses the beasts have in as great perfection as we; it is, as it were, a turning Christ, or the divine nature in the soul, into a mere animal. There is nothing wanting in the soul, as it is by nature, to render it capable of being the subject of all these external ideas, without any new principles. A natural man is as capable of having an idea, and a lively idea, of shapes, and colours, and sounds, when they are absent, as a regenerate man is: so there is nothing supernatural in them. And it is known by abundant experience, that it is not the advancing or perfecting human nature which makes persons more capable of having such lively and strong imaginary ideas; but that, on the contrary, the weakness of body and mind, and distempers of body, make persons abundantly more susceptive of such impressions.*

As to a truly spiritual sensation, not only is the manner of its coming into the mind extraordinary, but the sensation itself is totally diverse from all that men have, or can have, in a state of nature, as has been shown. But as to these external ideas, though the way of their coming into the mind is sometimes unusual, yet the ideas in themselves are not the better for that; they are still of no different sort from what men have by their senses; they are of no higher kind, nor a whit better. For instance, the external idea a

* "Conceits and whimsies abound most in men of weak reason; children, and such as are cracked in their understanding, have most of them; strength of reason banishes them, as the sun does mists and vapours. But now the more rational any gracious person is, by so much more is he fixed and settled, and satisfied in the grounds of religion: yea, there is the highest and purest reason in religion: and, when this change is wrought upon men, it is carried on in a rational way: Isa. i. 18. John xix. 9."—*Flavel's Preparation for Sufferings*, chap. vi.

man has now of Christ hanging on the cross, and shedding his blood, is no better in itself than the external idea that the Jews his enemies had, who stood round his cross, and saw this with their bodily eyes. The imaginary idea which men have now of an external brightness and glory of God, is no better than the idea the wicked congregation in the wilderness had of the external glory of the Lord at Mount Sinai, when they saw it with their bodily eyes; or any better than that idea which millions of cursed reprobates will have of the external glory of Christ at the day of judgment, who shall see and have a very lively idea of ten thousand times greater external glory of Christ than ever yet was conceived in any man's imagination:* yea, the image of Christ, which men conceive in their imaginations, is not, in its own nature, of any superior kind to the idea the Papists conceive of Christ, by the beautiful and affecting images of him which they see in their churches; (though the way of their receiving the idea may not be so bad;) nor are the affections they have, if built primarily on such imaginations, any better than the affections raised in ignorant people, by the sight of those images

* "If any man should see, and behold Christ really, immediately, this is not the saving knowledge of him. I know the saints do know Christ as if immediately present; they are not strangers by their distance: if others have seen him more immediately, I will not dispute it. But if they have seen the Lord Jesus as immediately as if here on earth, yet Capernaum saw him so; nay, some of them were disciples for a time, and followed him, John vi. And yet the Lord was hid from their eyes. Nay, all the world shall see him in his glory, which shall amaze them; and yet this is far short of having the saving knowledge of him, which the Lord doth communicate to the elect. So that though you see the Lord so really, as that you become familiar with him, yet, Luke xiii. 26. 'Lord, have we not eat and drank?' &c.—and so perish." —*Shepard's Parable of the Ten Virgins*, Part I. pp. 197, 198.

which oftentimes are very great; especially when these images, through the craft of the priests, are made to move, and speak, and weep, and the like.* Merely the way of persons receiving these imaginary ideas, does not alter the nature of the ideas themselves that are received: let them be received in what way they will, they are still but external ideas, or ideas of outward appearances, and so are not spiritual. Yea, if men should actually receive such external ideas by the immediate power of the Most High God upon their minds, they would not be spiritual, they should be no more than a common work of the Spirit of God; as is evident in fact, in the instance of Balaam, who had impressed on his mind, by God himself, a clear and lively outward representation or idea of Jesus Christ, as "the Star rising out of Jacob, when he heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High, and saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance," but yet had no manner of spiritual discovery of Christ; that Day-star never spiritually rose in his heart, he being but a natural man.

And as these external ideas have nothing divine or spiritual in their nature, and nothing but what natural men, without any new principles, are capable of,

* "Satan is transformed into an angel of light: and hence we have heard that some have heard voices; some have seen the very blood of Christ dropping on them, and his wounds in his side; some have seen a great light shining in the chamber; some wonderfully affected with their dreams; some in great distress have had inward witness—'Thy sins are forgiven;' and hence such liberty and joy, that they are ready to leap up and down the chamber. O adulterous generation! this is natural and usual with men, they would fain see Jesus, and have him present to give them peace; and hence Papists have his images.—Wo to them that have no other manifested Christ, but such an one."—*Shepard's Parable of the Ten Virgins*, Part I. p. 198.

so there is nothing in their nature which requires that peculiar, inimitable, and unparalleled exercise of the glorious power of God in order to their production, which it has been shown there is in the production of true grace. There appears to be nothing in their nature above the power of the devil. It is certainly not above the power of Satan to suggest thoughts to men; because otherwise he could not tempt them to sin. And if he can suggest any thoughts or ideas at all, doubtless imaginary ones, or ideas of things external, are not above his power;* for the external ideas men have are the lowest sort of ideas. These ideas may be raised only by impressions made on the body, by moving the animal spirits, and impressing the brain. Abundant experience does certainly show, that alterations in the body will excite imaginary or external ideas in the mind; as often, in case of a high fever, melancholy, &c. These external ideas are as much below the more intellectual exercises of the soul, as the body is a less noble part of man than the soul.

And there is not only nothing in the nature of these external ideas or imaginations of outward appearances, from whence we can infer that they are above the power of the devil; but it is certain also that the devil can excite, and often has excited such ideas. They were external ideas which he excited in the dreams and visions of the false prophets of old,

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* "Consider how difficult, yea, and impossible, it is to determine that such a voice, vision, or revelation is of God, and that Satan cannot feign or counterfeit it; seeing he hath left no certain marks by which we may distinguish one spirit from another."—*Flavel's Causes and Cures of Mental Terrors*, Cause 14.

who were under the influence of lying spirits, that we often read of in Scripture.* And they were external ideas that he often excited in the minds of the heathen priests, magicians, and sorcerers, in their visions and ecstacies; and they were external ideas that he excited in the mind of the man Christ Jesus, when he showed him all the kingdoms of the world, with the glory of them, when those kingdoms were not really in sight.

And if Satan, or any created being, has power to impress the mind with outward representations, then no particular sort of outward representations can be any evidence of a divine power. Almighty power is no more requisite to represent the shape of man to the imagination, than the shape of any thing else: there is no higher kind of power necessary to form in the brain one bodily shape or colour than another: it needs no more glorious power to represent the form of the body of man, than the form of a chip or block; though it be of a very beautiful human body, with a sweet smile in his countenance, or arms open, or blood running from hands, feet and side: that sort of power which can represent black or darkness to the imagination, can also represent white and shining brightness: the power and skill which can well and exactly paint a straw, or a stick of wood, on a piece of paper or canvass; the same in kind, only perhaps further improved, will be sufficient to paint the body of a man, with great beauty, and in royal majesty, or a magnificent city, paved with gold, full of brightness,

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* Deut. xiii. 1. 1 Kings xxii. 22. Isaiah xxviii. 7. Ezek. xiii. 7. Zech. xiii. 4.

and a glorious throne, &c. So it is no more than the same sort of power that is requisite to paint one as the other of these on the brain. The same sort of power that can put ink upon paper, can put on gold-leaf. So that it is evident to a demonstration, if we suppose it to be in the devil's power to make any sort of external representation at all on the fancy, (as without doubt it is, and never any one questioned it who believed there was a devil, that had any agency with mankind,)—I say, if so, it is demonstrably evident, that a created power may extend to all kinds of external appearances and ideas in the mind.

From hence it again clearly appears, that no such things have any thing in them that is spiritual, supernatural, and divine, in the sense in which it has been proved that all truly gracious experiences have. And though external ideas, through man's make and frame, do ordinarily in some degree attend spiritual experience, yet these ideas are no part of their spiritual experience, any more than the motion of the blood, and beating of the pulse, that attends experiences, are a part of spiritual experience. And though undoubtedly, through men's infirmity, in the present state, and especially through the weak constitution of some persons, gracious affections which are very strong, do excite lively ideas in the imagination; yet it is also undoubted, that when persons' affections are founded on imaginations, which is often the case, those affections are merely natural and common, because they are built on a foundation that is not spiritual; and so are entirely different from gracious affections, which, as has been proved, do evermore arise from those operations that are spiritual and divine.

These imaginations do oftentimes raise the carnal affections of men to an exceeding great height:* and

* There is a remarkable passage of Mr. John Smith, in his Discourse on the Shortness of a Pharisaic Righteousness, p. 370, 371, of his select Discourses, describing that sort of religion which is built on such a foundation as I am here speaking of. I cannot forbear transcribing the whole of it. Speaking of a sort of Christians, whose life is nothing but a strong energy of fancy, he says, "Lest their religion might too grossly discover itself to be nothing else but a piece of art, there may be sometimes such extraordinary motions stirred up within them, which may prevent all their own thoughts, that they may seem to be a true operation of the divine life; when yet all this is nothing else but the energy of their own self-love, touched with some fleshly apprehensions of divine things, and excited by them. There are such things in our Christian religion, when a carnal unhallowed mind takes the chair, and gets the expounding of them, as may seem very delicious to the fleshly appetites of men; some doctrines and notions of free grace and justification, the magnificent titles of sons of God and heirs of heaven, overflowing streams of joy and pleasure that blessed souls shall swim in to all eternity, a glorious paradise in the world to come, always springing up with well-scented and fragrant beauties, a new Jerusalem paved with gold, and bespangled with stars, comprehending in its vast circuit such numberless varieties, that a busy curiosity may spend itself about to all eternity. I doubt not but that sometimes the most fleshly and earthly men, that fly in their ambition to the pomp of this world, may be so ravished with the conceits of such things as these, that they may seem to be made partakers of the powers of the world to come. I doubt not but that they might be much exalted with them, as the souls of crazed and distracted persons seem to be sometimes, when their fancies play with those quick and nimble spirits which a distempered frame of body, and unnatural heat in their heads, beget within them. Thus may these blazing comets rise up above the moon, and climb higher than the sun; which yet, because they have no solid consistence of their own, and are of a base and earthly alloy, will soon vanish and fall down again, being only borne up by an external force. They may seem to themselves to have attained higher than those noble Christians, that are gently moved by the natural force of true goodness; they seem to be *pleneores Deo*, (that is, more full of God,) than those that are really informed and actuated by the divine Spirit, and do move on steadily and constantly in the way towards heaven. As the seed that was sown in stony ground, grew up, and lengthened out its blade faster than that which was sown in the good and fruitful soil. And as the motions of our sense, and fancy, and passions, while our souls are in this mortal condition, sunk down

no wonder, when the subjects of them have an ignorant but undoubting persuasion, that they are divine manifestations, which the great JEHOVAH immediately makes to their souls, therein giving them testimonies, in an extraordinary manner, of his high and peculiar favour.

Again, it is evident, from what has been observed and proved of the manner in which gracious operations and effects in the heart are spiritual, supernatural and divine, that the immediate suggestion of the words of Scripture to the mind, has nothing in it which is spiritual.

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deeply into the body, are many times more vigorous, and make stronger impressions upon us, than those of the higher powers of the soul, which are more subtle and remote from these mixed animal perceptions; that devotion which is there seated may seem to have more energy and life in it, than that which gently, and with a more delicate kind of touch, spreads itself upon the understanding, and from thence mildly derives itself through our wills and affections. But however the former may be more boisterous for a time, yet this is of a more consistent, spermatical, and thriving nature. For that proceeding indeed from nothing but a sensual and fleshly apprehension of God and true happiness, is but of a flitting and fading nature; and as the sensible powers and faculties grow more languid, or the sun of divine light shines more brightly upon us, these earthly devotions, like our culinary fires, will abate their heat and fervour. But a true celestial warmth will never be extinguished, because it is of an immortal nature: and being once seated vitally in the souls of men, it will regulate and order all the motions of it in a due manner; as the natural heat, radicated in the hearts of living creatures, hath the dominion and economy of the whole body under it. True religion is no piece of artifice; it is no boiling up of our imaginative powers, nor the glowing heats of passion; though these are too often mistaken for it, when in our jugglings in religion we cast a mist before our own eyes: but it is a new nature, informing the souls of men; it is a Godlike frame of Spirit, discovering itself most of all in serene and clear minds, in deep humility, meekness, self-denial, universal love to God and all true goodness, without partiality, and without hypocrisy; whereby we are taught to know God, and knowing him, to love him, and conform ourselves as much as may be to all that perfection which shines in him."

I have had occasion to say something of this already; and what has been said may be sufficient to evince it; but if the reader bears in mind what has been said concerning the nature of spiritual influences and effects, it will be more abundantly manifest that this is no spiritual effect. For I suppose there is no person of common understanding, who will say or imagine, that the bringing words (let them be what words they will) to the mind, is an effect of that nature which it is impossible the mind of a natural man, while he remains in a state of nature, should be the subject of, or any thing like it; or that it requires any new divine sense in the soul, or that the bringing sounds or letters to the mind, is an effect of so high, holy, and excellent a nature, that it is impossible any created power should be the cause of it.

As the suggesting words of Scripture to the mind is only the exciting in the mind ideas of certain sounds or letters; so it is only one way of exciting ideas in the imagination; for sounds and letters are external things, that are the objects of the external senses of seeing and hearing. Ideas of certain marks upon paper, such as any of the twenty-four letters, in whatever order, or any sounds of the voice, are as much external ideas, as of any other shapes or sounds whatsoever: and, therefore, by what has been already said concerning these external ideas, it is evident they are nothing spiritual; and if at any time the Spirit of God suggests these letters or sounds to the mind, this is a common, and not any special or gracious influence of that Spirit. And, therefore, it follows from what has been already proved, that those

affections which have this effect for their foundation, are no spiritual or gracious affections.—But let it be observed what it is that I say, namely, when this effect, even the immediate and extraordinary manner of words of Scripture coming to the mind, is that which excites the affections, and is properly the foundation of them, then these affections are not spiritual. It may be so, that persons may have gracious affections going with Scriptures which come to their minds, and the Spirit of God may make use of those Scriptures to excite them; when it is some spiritual sense, taste, or relish they have of the divine and excellent things contained in these Scriptures, that is the thing which excites their affections, and not the extraordinary and sudden manner of words being brought to their minds. They are affected with the instruction they receive from the words, and the view of the glorious things of God or Christ, and things appertaining to them, that they contain and teach; and not because the words came suddenly, as though some person had spoke them to them, thence concluding that God did as it were immediately speak to them. Persons oftentimes are exceedingly affected on this foundation; the words of some great and high promises of Scripture come suddenly to their minds, and they look upon the words as directed immediately by God to them, as though the words that moment proceeded out of the mouth of God as spoken to them; so that they take it as a voice from God, immediately revealing to them their happy circumstances, and promising such and such great things to them: and this it is that affects and elevates them. There is no new spiritual understanding of the divine

things contained in the Scripture, or new spiritual sense of the glorious things taught in that part of the Bible, going before their affection, and being the foundation of it; all the new understanding they have, or think they have, to be the foundation of their affection, is this, that the words are spoken to them, because they come so suddenly and extraordinarily. And so this affection is built wholly on the sand; because it is built on a conclusion for which they have no foundation. For, as has been shown, the sudden coming of the words to their minds, is no evidence that the bringing them to their minds in that manner, was from God. And if it was true that God brought the words to their minds, and they certainly knew it, that would not be spiritual knowledge; it may be without any spiritual sense. Balaam might know that the words which God suggested to him, were indeed suggested to him by God, and yet have no spiritual knowledge. So that these affections which are built on that notion, that texts of Scripture are sent immediately from God, are built on no spiritual foundation, and are vain and delusive. Persons who have their affections thus raised, if they should be inquired of, whether they have any new sense of the excellency of things contained in those Scriptures, would probably say, Yes, without hesitation: but it is true no otherwise than thus, that when they have taken up that notion, that the words are spoken immediately to them, that makes them seem sweet to them, and they own the things which these Scriptures say to them, for excellent things, and wonderful things. As for instance, supposing these were the words which were suddenly brought to their

minds, " Fear not,——it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom;" they have confidently taken up a notion that the words were, as it were, immediately spoken from heaven to them, as an immediate revelation, that God was their Father, and had given the kingdom to them, they are greatly affected by it, and the words seem sweet to them; and O, they say, they are excellent things that are contained in those words! But the reason why the promise seems excellent to them, is only because they think it is made to them immediately: all the sense they have of any glory in them, is only from self-love, and from their own imagined interest in the words; not that they had any view or sense of the holy and glorious nature of the kingdom of heaven, and the spiritual glory of that God who gives it, and of his excellent grace to sinful men, in offering and giving them this kingdom, of his own good pleasure, preceding their imagined interest in these things, and their being affected by them, and being the foundation of their affection, and hope of an interest in them. On the contrary, they first imagine they are interested, and then are highly affected with that, and then can own these things to be excellent. So that the sudden and extraordinary way of the Scripture coming to their mind, is plainly the first foundation of the whole; which is a clear evidence of the wretched delusion they are under.

The first comfort of many persons, and what they call their conversion, is after this manner: after awakening and terrors, some comfortable sweet promise comes suddenly and wonderfully to their minds; and the manner of its coming makes them conclude

it comes from God to them; and this is the very thing that is all the foundation of their faith, and hope, and comfort: from hence they take their first encouragement to trust in God and in Christ, because they think that God by some scripture so brought, has now already revealed to them that he loves them, and has already promised them eternal life: which is very absurd; for every one of common knowledge of the principles of religion, knows that it is God's manner to reveal his love to men, and their interest in the promises, after they have believed, and not before; because they must first believe before they have any interest in the promises to be revealed. The Spirit of God is a Spirit of truth, and not of lies: he does not bring scriptures to men's minds, to reveal to them that they have an interest in God's favour and promises, when they have none, having not yet believed; which would be the case, if God's bringing texts of Scripture to men's minds, to reveal to them that their sins were forgiven, or that it was God's pleasure to give them the kingdom, or any thing of that nature, went before, and was the foundation of their first faith. There is no promise of the covenant of grace belongs to any man until he has first believed in Christ; for it is by faith alone that we become interested in Christ, and the promises of the new covenant made in him; and, therefore, whatever spirit applies the promises of that covenant to a person who has not first believed, as being already his, must be a lying spirit; and that faith which is first built on such an application of promises, is built upon a lie. God's manner is not to bring comfortable texts of scripture to give men assurance of his

love, and that they shall be happy, before they have had a faith of dependence.* And if the Scripture

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* Mr. Stoddard, in his "Guide to Christ," p. 8. says, that "Sometimes men, after they have been in trouble a while, have some promises come to them, with a great deal of refreshing; and they hope God has accepted them:" and says, that "in this case, the minister may tell them, that God never gives a faith of assurance, before he gives a faith of dependence; for he never manifests his love, until men are in a state of favour and reconciliation, which is by faith of dependence. When men have comfortable scriptures come to them, they are apt to take them as tokens of God's love; but men must be brought into Christ, by accepting the offer of the gospel, before they are fit for such manifestations. God's method is, first to make the soul accept of the offers of grace, and then to manifest his good estate unto him." And p. 76. speaking of them that seem to be brought to lie at God's foot, and give an account of their closing with Christ, and that God has revealed Christ to them, and drawn their hearts to him, and they do accept of Christ, he says, "In this case it is best to examine whether by that light that was given him, he saw Christ and salvation offered to him, or whether he saw that God loved him, or pardoned him: for the offer of grace and our acceptance goes before pardon, and, therefore, much more, before the knowledge of it."

Mr. Shepard, in his "Parable of the Ten Virgins," Part II. p. 15. says, that "Grace and the love of Christ (the fairest colours under the sun) may be pretended; but if you shall receive, under this appearance, that God witnesseth his love, first by an absolute promise, take heed there; for under this appearance you may as well bring in immediate revelations, and from thence come to forsake the Scriptures."

And in Part I. p. 86. he says, "Is Christ yours? Yes, I see it. How? By any word or promise? No: this is delusion." And p. 136. speaking of them that have no solid ground of peace, he reckons, "those that content themselves with the revelation of the Lord's love, without the sight of any work, or not looking to it." And says presently after, "The testimony of the Spirit does not make a man more a Christian, but only evidenceth it; as it is the nature of a witness, not to make a thing to be true, but to clear and evidence it." And p. 140. speaking of them that say they have the witness of the Spirit, that makes a difference between them and hypocrites, he says, "The witness of the Spirit makes not the first difference: for first a man is a believer, and in Christ, and justified, called, and sanctified, before the Spirit does witness it, else the Spirit should witness to an untruth, and lie."

which comes to a person's mind, be not so properly a promise, as an invitation; yet if he makes the sudden or unusual manner of the invitation coming to his mind, the ground on which he believes that he is invited, it is not true faith; because it is built on that which is not the true ground of faith. True faith is built on no precarious foundation: but a determination that the words of such a particular text, were, by the immediate power of God, suggested to the mind, at such a time, as though then spoken and directed by God to him, because the words came after such a manner, is wholly an uncertain and precarious determination; and therefore is a false and sandy foundation for faith; and accordingly that faith which is built upon it is false. The only certain foundation which any person has to believe that he is invited to partake of the blessings of the gospel, is, that the word of God declares that persons so qualified as he is, are invited, and God who declares it, is true and cannot lie. If a sinner be once convinced of the veracity of God, and that the Scriptures are his word, he will need no more to convince and satisfy him, that he is invited; for the Scriptures are full of invitations to sinners, to the chief of sinners, to come and partake of the benefits of the gospel: he will not want any new speaking of God to him, what he hath spoken already will be enough with him.

As the first comfort of many persons, and their affections at the time of their supposed conversion, are built on such grounds as these which have been mentioned; so are their joys and hopes, and other affections, from time to time afterwards. They have

often particular words of Scripture, sweet declarations and promises suggested to them, which by reason of the manner of their coming, they think are immediately sent from God to them, at that time; which they look upon as their warrant to take them, and which they actually make the main ground of their appropriating them to themselves, and of the comfort they take in them, and the confidence they receive from them. Thus they imagine a kind of conversation is carried on between God and them; and that God, from time to time, does as it were immediately speak to them, and satisfy their doubts, and testifies his love to them, and promises them supports and supplies, and his blessing in such and such cases, and reveals to them clearly their interest in eternal blessings. And thus they are often elevated, and have a course of a sudden and tumultuous kind of joys, mingled with a strong confidence, and high opinion of themselves; when indeed the main ground of these joys, and this confidence, is not any thing contained in, or taught by these scriptures, as they lie in the Bible, but the manner of their coming to them; which is a certain evidence of their delusion. There is no particular promise in the word of God that is the saint's, or is any otherwise made to him, or spoken to him, than all the promises of the covenant of grace are his, and are made to him, and spoken to him:*

* Mr. Shepard, in his "Sound believer," p. 159. of the late impression at Boston, says, "Embrace in thy bosom not only some few promises, but all." And then he asks the question, "When may a Christian take a promise without presumption, as spoken to him?" He answers, "The rule is very sweet, but certain; when he takes all the Scripture, and embraces it as spoken unto him, he may then take any particular promise boldly. My meaning is, when a Christian takes hold, and wrestles with God

though it be true that some of these promises may be more peculiarly adapted to his case than others, and God, by his Spirit, may enable him better to understand some than others, and to have a greater sense of the preciousness, and glory, and suitableness of the blessings contained in them.

But here some may be ready to say, What, is there no such thing as any particular spiritual application of the promises of Scripture by the Spirit of God? I answer, there is doubtless such a thing as a spiritual and saving application of the invitations and promises of Scripture to the souls of men: but it is also certain, that the nature of it is wholly misunderstood by many, to the great ensnaring of their own souls, and the giving Satan a vast advantage against them, and against the interest of religion, and the church of God. The spiritual application of a scripture promise does not consist in its being immediately suggested to the thoughts by some extrinsic agent, and being borne into the mind with this strong apprehension, that it is particularly spoken and directed to them at that time. There is no evidence of the hand of God in this effect, as events have proved, in many notorious instances; and it is a mean notion of a spiritual application of Scripture; there is nothing in the nature of it at all beyond the power of the devil, if he be not restrained by God; for there is nothing in the nature of the effect that is spiritual,

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for the accomplishment of all the promises of the New Testament, when he sets all the commands before him, as a compass and guide to walk after, when he applies all the threatenings to drive him nearer unto Christ, the end of them. This no hypocrite can do; this the saints shall do; and by this they may know when the Lord speaks in particular unto them."

implying any vital communication of God. A truly spiritual application of the word of God is of a vastly higher nature; as much above the devil's power, as it is, so to apply the word of God to a dead corpse, as to raise it to life; or to a stone, to turn it into an angel. A spiritual application of the word of God consists in applying it to the heart, in spiritually enlightening, sanctifying influences. A spiritual application of an invitation or offer of the gospel consists in giving the soul a spiritual sense or relish of the holy and divine blessings offered, and also the sweet and wonderful grace of the offerer, in making so gracious an offer, and of his holy excellency and faithfulness to fulfil what he offers, and his glorious sufficiency for it; so leading and drawing forth the heart to embrace the offer; and thus giving the man evidence of his title to the thing offered. And so a spiritual application of the promises of Scripture, for the comfort of the saints, consists in enlightening their minds to see the holy excellency and sweetness of the blessings promised, and also the holy excellency of the Promiser, and his faithfulness and sufficiency; thus drawing forth their hearts to embrace the Promiser, and thing promised; and by this means, giving the sensible actings of grace, enabling them to see their grace, and so their title to the promise. An application not consisting in this divine sense and enlightening of the mind, but consisting only in the word being borne into the thoughts, as if immediately then spoken, so making persons believe, on no other foundation, that the promise is theirs, is a blind application, and belongs to the spirit of darkness, and not of light.

When persons have their affections raised after this manner, those affections are really not raised by the word of God; the Scripture is not the foundation of them; it is not any thing contained in those Scriptures which come to their minds, that raise their affections; but truly that effect, namely, the strange manner of the word's being suggested to their minds, and a proposition from thence taken up by them, which indeed is not contained in that Scripture, nor any other; as that his sins are forgiven him, or that it is the Father's good pleasure to give him in particular the kingdom, or the like. There are propositions to be found in the Bible, declaring that persons of such and such qualifications are forgiven and beloved of God; but there are no propositions to be found in the Bible declaring that such and such particular persons, independent of any previous knowledge of any qualifications, are forgiven and beloved of God: and therefore, when any person is comforted and affected by any such proposition, it is by another word, a word newly coined, and not any word of God contained in the Bible.* And thus many persons are vainly affected and deluded.

* "Some Christians have rested with a work without Christ, which is abominable: but after a man is in Christ, not to judge by the work, is first not to judge from a word. For though there is a word, which may give a man a dependence on Christ, without feeling any work, nay, when he feels none, as absolute promises; yet no word giving assurance, but that which is made to some work, 'He that believeth, or is poor in spirit,' &c. until that work is seen, has no assurance from that promise."—*Shepard's Parable of the Ten Virgins*, Part I. p. 86.

"If God should tell a saint that he has grace, he might know it by believing the word of God; but it is not in this way that godly men do know that they have grace; it is not revealed in the word, and the Spirit of God doth not testify it to particular persons."—*Stoddard's Nature of Saving Conversion*, p. 84, 85.

Again, it plainly appears, from what has been demonstrated, that no revelation of secret facts by immediate suggestion, is any thing spiritual and divine, in that sense wherein gracious effects and operations are so.

By secret facts, I mean things that have been done, or are come to pass, or shall hereafter come to pass, which are secret in that sense that they do not appear to the senses, nor are known by any argumentation, or any evidence to reason, nor any other way, but only a revelation by immediate suggestion of the ideas of them to the mind. For instance, if it should be revealed to me, that the next year this land would be invaded by a fleet from France, or that such and such persons would then be converted, or that I myself should then be converted; not by enabling me to argue out these events from any thing which now appears in providence, but immediately suggesting and bearing in upon my mind, in an extraordinary manner, the apprehension or ideas of these facts, with a strong suggestion or impression on my mind, that I had no hand in myself, that these things would come to pass: or if it should be revealed to me, that this day there is a battle fought between the armies of such and such powers in Europe; or that such a prince in Europe was this day converted, or is now in a converted state, having been converted formerly, or that one of my neighbours is converted, or that I myself am converted; not by having any other evidence of any of these facts, from whence I argue them, but an immediate extraordinary suggestion or excitation of these ideas, and a strong impression of them upon my mind—this is a revelation of secret facts by immediate suggestion, as much as if the facts

were future; for the facts being past, present, or future, alters not the case, as long as they are secret and hidden from my senses and reason, and not spoken of in Scripture, nor known by me any other way than by immediate suggestion. If I have it revealed to me, that such a revolution is come to pass this day in the Ottoman empire, it is the very same sort of revelation, as if it were revealed to me that such a revolution would come to pass there this day twelvemonth; because, though one is present and the other future, yet both are equally hidden from me, any other way than by immediate revelation. When Samuel told Saul that the asses which he went to seek were found, and that his father had left caring for the asses and sorrowed for him, this was by the same kind of revelation as that by which he told Saul, that in the plain of Tabor there should meet him three men going up to God to Bethel, though one of these things was future and the other was not. So when Elisha told the king of Israel the words that the king of Syria spake in his bed-chamber, it was by the same kind of revelation with that by which he foretold many things to come.

It is evident that this revelation of secret facts by immediate suggestion has nothing of the nature of a spiritual and divine operation, in the sense forementioned. There is nothing at all in the nature of the perceptions or ideas themselves which are excited in the mind that is divinely excellent, and so, far above all the ideas of natural men; though the manner of exciting the ideas be extraordinary. In those things which are spiritual, not only the manner of producing the effect, but the effect wrought is divine, and so

vastly above all that can be in an unsanctified mind. Now simply the having an idea of facts, setting aside the manner of producing those ideas, is nothing beyond what the minds of wicked men are susceptible of, without any goodness in them; and they all either have, or will have, the knowledge of the truth of the greatest and most important facts, that have been, are, or shall be.

And as to the extraordinary manner of producing the ideas or perceptions of facts, even by immediate suggestion, there is nothing in it but what the minds of natural men, while they are yet natural men, are capable of, as is manifest in Balaam, and others spoken of in Scripture. And therefore it appears, that there is nothing appertaining to this immediate suggestion of secret facts that is spiritual, in the sense in which it has been proved that gracious operations are so. If there be nothing in the ideas themselves which is holy and divine, and so nothing but what may be in a mind not sanctified, then God can put them into the mind by immediate power without sanctifying it. As there is nothing in the idea of a rainbow itself that is of a holy and divine nature, so there is nothing hinders but that an unsanctified mind may receive that idea: so God, if he pleases, and when he pleases, immediately, and in an extraordinary manner, may excite that idea in an unsanctified mind. So also, as there is nothing in the idea or knowledge that such and such particular persons are forgiven and accepted of God, and entitled to heaven, but what unsanctified minds may have, and will have, concerning many at the day of judgment; so God can, if he pleases, extraordinarily and immediately suggest this to, and

impress it upon, an unsanctified mind now. There is no principle wanting in an unsanctified mind to make it capable of such a suggestion or impression, nor is there any thing in them to exclude, or necessarily to prevent such a suggestion.

And if these suggestions of secret facts be attended with texts of Scripture immediately and extraordinarily brought to mind, about some other facts that seem in some respects similar, that does not make the operation to be of a spiritual and divine nature. For that suggestion of words of Scripture is no more divine than the suggestion of the facts themselves; as has been just now demonstrated: and two effects together, which are neither of them spiritual, cannot make up one complex effect that is spiritual.

Hence it follows, from what has been often repeated, that those affections which are properly founded on such immediate suggestions, or supposed suggestions, of secret facts, are not gracious affections. Not but that it is possible that such suggestions may be the occasion or accidental cause of gracious affections; for so may a mistake and delusion: but it is never properly the foundation of gracious affections; for gracious affections are all the effects of an influence and operation which is spiritual, supernatural, and divine. But there are many affections, and high affections, that have such kind of suggestions or revelations for their very foundation: they look upon these as spiritual discoveries, which is a gross delusion, and this delusion is truly the spring whence their affections flow.

Here it may be proper to observe, that it is exceedingly manifest from what has been said, that what

many persons call the witness of the Spirit that they are the children of God, has nothing in it spiritual and divine: and consequently, that the affections built upon it are vain and delusive. That which many call the witness of the Spirit, is no other than an immediate suggestion and impression of that fact, otherwise secret, that they are converted, or made the children of God, and that their sins are pardoned, and that God has given them a title to heaven. This kind of knowledge, namely, knowing that a certain person is converted, and delivered from hell, and entitled to heaven, is no divine knowledge in itself. This sort of fact does not require any higher or more divine kind of suggestion to impress it on the mind, than any other fact which Balaam had impressed on his mind. It requires no higher sort of idea or sensation for a man to have the apprehension of his own conversion impressed upon him, than to have the apprehension of his neighbour's conversion impressed: but God, if he pleased, might impress the knowledge of this fact, that he had forgiven his neighbour's sins, and given him a title to heaven, as well as any other fact, without any communication of his holiness. The excellency and importance of the fact does not at all hinder a natural man's mind being susceptible of an immediate suggestion and impression of it. Balaam had as excellent, and important, and glorious facts as this immediately impressed on his mind, without any gracious influence; particularly, the coming of Christ, and his setting up his glorious kingdom, and the blessedness of the spiritual Israel in his peculiar favour, and their happiness living and dying. Yea, Abimelech, king of the Philistines, had God's special

favour to a particular person, even Abraham, revealed to him. So it seems that he revealed to Laban his special favour to Jacob.* And if, in like manner, a truly good man should have an immediate revelation or suggestion from God, concerning his favour to his neighbour, or himself, it would be no higher kind of influence; it would be no more than a common sort of influence of God's Spirit; as the gift of prophecy, and as all revelation by immediate suggestion is.† And though it be true, that it is not possible that a natural man should have that individual suggestion from the Spirit of God, that he is converted, because it is not true; yet that does not arise from the nature of the influence, because that kind of influence which suggests such excellent facts, is too high for him to be the subject of; but purely from the defect of a fact to be revealed. The influence which immediately suggests this fact, when it is true, is of no different kind from that which immediately suggests other true facts: and so the kind and nature of the influence is not above what is common to natural men, with good men.

But this is a mean, ignoble notion of the witness of the Spirit of God given to his dear children, to suppose that there is nothing in the kind and nature of that influence of the Spirit of God, in imparting this high and glorious benefit, but what is common to natural men, or which men are capable of, and be in the meantime altogether unsanctified, and the children of hell; and that therefore the benefit or gift itself has nothing of the holy nature of the Spirit

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* Gen. xxxi. 24. Psalm cv. 15. † 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

of God in it, nothing of a vital communication of that Spirit. This notion greatly debases that high and most exalted kind of influence and operation of the Spirit, which there is in the true witness of the Spirit.* That which is called the witness of the Spirit, Rom. viii. is elsewhere in the New Testament called the seal of the Spirit, 2 Cor. i. 22. Eph. i. 13. and iv. 13. alluding to the seal of princes, annexed to the instrument, by which they advanced any of their subjects to some high honour and dignity, or peculiar privilege in the kingdom, as a token of their special favour. Which is an evidence that the influence of the Spirit of the Prince of princes, in sealing his favourites, is far from being of a common kind; and that there is no effect of God's Spirit whatsoever which is in its nature more divine; nothing more holy, peculiar, inimitable, and distinguishing of divinity.

* The late venerable Stoddard, in his younger time, falling in with the opinion of some others, received this notion of the witness of the Spirit, by way of immediate suggestion; but, in the latter part of his life, when he had more thoroughly weighed things, and had more experience, he entirely rejected it; as appears by his Treatise of the Nature of Saving Conversion, p. 84. "The Spirit of God doth not testify to particular persons that they are godly. Some think that the Spirit of God doth testify it to some; and they ground it on Rom. viii. 16. 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God.' They think the Spirit reveals it by giving an inward testimony to it; and some godly men think they have had experience of it: but they may easily mistake; when the Spirit of God doth eminently stir up a spirit of faith, and sheds abroad the love of God in the heart, it is easy to mistake it for a testimony. And that is not the meaning of Paul's words. The Spirit reveals things to us; by opening our eyes to see what is revealed in the word; but the Spirit doth not reveal new truths, not revealed in the word. The Spirit discovers the grace of God in Christ, and thereby draws forth special actings of faith and love, which are evidential; but it doth not work in way of testimony. If God do but help us to receive the revelations in the word, we shall have comfort enough without new revelations."

Nothing is more royal than the royal seal; nothing more sacred that belongs to a prince, and more peculiarly denoting what belongs to him; it being the very end and design of it, to be the most peculiar stamp and confirmation of the royal authority, and great note of distinction, whereby that which proceeds from the king, or belongs to him, may be known from every thing else. And therefore, undoubtedly, the seal of the great King of heaven and earth, enstamped on the heart, is something high and holy in its own nature, some excellent communication from the infinite fountain of divine beauty and glory; and not merely a making known a secret fact by revelation or suggestion; which is a sort of influence of the Spirit of God, that the children of the devil have often been the subjects of. The seal of the Spirit is a kind of effect of the Spirit of God on the heart, which natural men, while such, are so far from a capacity of being the subjects of, that they can have no manner of notion or idea of it: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it." There is all reason to suppose that what is here spoken of is the same mark, evidence, or blessed token of special favour, which is elsewhere called the seal of the Spirit.

What has misled many in their notion of that influence of the Spirit of God we are speaking of, is the word *witness*, its being called *the witness* of the Spirit. Hence they have taken it, not to be any effect or work of the Spirit upon the heart, giving evidence from whence men may argue that they are

the children of God, but an inward, immediate suggestion, as though God inwardly spoke to the man, and testified to him that he was his child, by a kind of a secret voice, or impression: not observing the manner in which the word witness, or testimony, is often used in the New Testament, where such terms often signify, not only a mere declaring and asserting a thing to be true, but holding forth evidence from whence a thing may be argued, and proved to be true. God is said to "bear witness, with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost." Now these miracles here spoken of are called God's witness, not because they are of the nature of assertions, but evidences and proofs: "Long time, therefore, abode they, speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands." And, "But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me." Again, "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." So the water and the blood are said to bear witness, not that they spoke or asserted any thing, but they were proofs and evidences. So God's works of providence, in the rain and fruitful seasons, are spoken of as witnesses of God's being and goodness, that is, they were evidences of these things. And when the Scripture speaks of the seal of the Spirit, it is an expression which properly denotes, not an immediate voice or suggestion, but some work or effect of the Spirit, that is left as a divine mark upon the soul, to be an

evidence, by which God's children might be known. The seals of princes were the distinguishing marks of princes: and thus God's seal is spoken of as God's mark: "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. "Set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abomination that are done in the midst thereof." When God sets his seal on a man's heart by his Spirit, there is some holy stamp, some image impressed and left upon the heart by the Spirit, as by the seal upon the wax. And this holy stamp or impressed image, exhibiting clear evidence to the conscience, that the subject of it is the child of God, is the very thing which in Scripture is called the seal of the Spirit, and the witness, or evidence of the Spirit. And this image enstamped by the Spirit on God's children's hearts, is his own image. That is the evidence by which they are known to be God's children, that they have the image of their Father stamped upon their hearts by the Spirit of adoption. Seals anciently had engraved on them two things, namely, the image, and the name of the person whose seal it was. Therefore, when Christ says to his spouse, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm;" it is as much as to say, Let my name and image remain impressed there. The seals of princes were wont to bear their image; so that what they set their seal and royal mark upon, had their image left on it. It was the manner of princes of old to have their image engraven on their jewels and precious stones; and the image of Augustus engraven on a precious stone, was used as the seal

of the Roman emperors, in Christ's and the apostles' times.* And the saints are the jewels of Jesus Christ, the great potentate, who has the possession of the empire of the universe: and these jewels have his image enstamped upon them, by his royal signet, which is the Holy Spirit. And this is undoubtedly what the Scripture means by the seal of the Spirit; especially when it is stamped in so fair and clear a manner, as to be plain to the eye of conscience; which is what the Scripture calls our spirit. This is truly an effect that is spiritual, supernatural, and divine. This is in itself of a holy nature, being a communication of the divine nature and beauty. That kind of influence of the Spirit which gives and leaves this stamp upon the heart, is such that no natural man can be the subject of any thing of the like nature with it. This is the highest sort of witness of the Spirit, which it is possible the soul should be the subject of: if there were any such thing as a witness of the Spirit by immediate suggestion or revelation, this would be vastly more noble and excellent, and as much above it as the heaven is above the earth. This the devil cannot imitate: as to an inward suggestion of the Spirit of God, by a kind of secret voice speaking, and immediately asserting and revealing a fact, he can do that which is a thousand times so like to this, as he can do that holy and divine effect, or work of the Spirit of God, which has been now spoken of.†

* See Chamber's Dictionary, under the word ENGRAVING.

† Mr. Shepard is abundant in militating against the notion of men's knowing their good estate by an immediate witness of the Spirit, without judging by any effect or work of the Spirit, wrought on the heart, as an evidence and proof that persons are the chil-

Another thing which is a full proof that the seal of the Spirit is no revelation of any fact by immediate

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dren of God, Parab. P. I. p. 134. "Knowing your election of God." How so? Immediately? Some divines think angels see it not so, and that it is peculiar to God so to do; but mediately: "For our word came in power, and in much assurance," to make you enlarged for God, "to turn you from idols unto God," &c. Again, in the same page, "It is heaven to cleave to him in every command; it is death to depart from any command. Hereby know we that we are in him. If it were possible to ask of the angels, How they know they are not devils? they would answer, The Lord's will is ours. So here, how do you know you have not the nature of devils, and so in a state of devils, bound there until the judgment of the great day? Because God hath changed our vile natures, and made our wills like unto his glorious will." And p. 135. "The major is the word, the minor experience, and the conclusion the Lord's Spirit's work, quickening your spirits to it. Now, say some, how do you know this? This you may be mistaken; for many have been deceived thus. Grant that; and shall a child not take bread when it is given him, though dogs snatch at it?" And p. 137. "If you look to a spirit without a work, whilst you do seek consolation, you cannot avoid the condemnation of the word. You say the Spirit has spoken peace to you: but do you love Christ? I look not to that, but to the Spirit. Why, the word saith, 'He that loves him not, let him be Anathema.' So is the league between your sins and your souls broken! Ans. I look not to that. Why, John saith, 'He that committeth sin is of the devil.' Are you new creatures? I look not to that. Why, the word saith, 'unless you be born again you cannot enter into the kingdom of God.'"—Pag. 176, 177. "A man saith, I have Christ; and so have not they? I ask, where is the Spirit? You have the deed; where is the seal? You have the testator; where is the executor? the Spirit in you? Yes, I have it; it has witnessed Christ is mine. Ans. It has witnessed; but what has it wrought? where is the power of his death, killing thy lusts? where is the life of the Spirit of Jesus in you? where is the oil in your vessel? Truly I look for the Bridegroom; but I regard not that; neither are others to regard it in the way of evidence. Then I say, the chief evidence is destroyed in the churches. I have known many that have had assurances; yet never saw them prove right, until it witnessed this was here. What should be the causes of this, and that men should make blusters in the churches because of this, as though it was building on works? In several men they are several. 1. An aptness to out-run the truth, and to fall from one extreme to another.—2. The apostacy of eminent professors, who have been deceived in their evidencing thus.—3. Corrupt experiences.

suggestion, but is grace itself in the soul, is, that the seal of the Spirit is called "the earnest of the

—4. A heart that never felt the bitterness and bondage of sin, as the greatest evil."—Pag. 215, 216. "The peace, and joy, and assurance of that glory, which eye never saw, in the saints, it is from the witness of the Spirit of glory; not only because that God is their God, but because they are his people. It is, I say, from the witness of God in his word; not from themselves, nor from man only, that they approve me; nor from dreams and diabolical breathings; but from the Spirit of God: he brings tidings of it; and from such a spirit (that you may know it) that not only shows you God is your God, and so you rejoice because of this: for thus it is with many a carnal heart, and he hath peace, being in horror, from this, The Lord loves me; but he makes you to rejoice, because you are the Lord's people, because he hath changed your heart; now the peace is sound, and joy is right; and here I would try the peace of any man."—Part II. p. 168, 169. "All the heirs of the promises, as heirs that have legacies left them, they go to the will of the deceased father; and that comforts, that they hold to, that is sure; such a one shall have it, if his name be there. But if one shall say, such a one hath promised me much lands; Is it in his will? No; but since he died, as I was taking a pipe, he came to me. Oh be not deceived!"

Again, in his "Sound Believer," there is a long discourse of sanctification as the chief evidence of justification, from p. 221, for many pages following. I shall transcribe but a very small part of it.—"Tell me, how you will know that you are justified? You will say by the testimony of the Spirit. And cannot the same Spirit shine upon your graces, and witness that you are sanctified, as well? 1 John iv. 13, 24. 1 Cor. ii. 12. Can the Spirit make the one clear to you, and not the other? Oh, beloved, it is a sad thing to hear such questions, and such cold answers also, that sanctification possibly may be an evidence. May be! Is it not certain? Assuredly to deny it, is as bad as to affirm that God's own promises of favour are not true evidences thereof, and consequently that they are lies and untruths."

Mr. Flavel also much opposes this notion of the witness of the Spirit by immediate revelation. Sacramental Meditations, Med. 4. speaking of the sealing of the Spirit, he says, "In sealing the believer, he doth not make use of an audible voice, nor the ministry of angels, nor immediate and extraordinary revelations; but he makes use of his own graces, implanted in our hearts, and his own promises, written in the Scripture; and in this method, he usually brings the doubting trembling heart of a believer to rest and comfort." Again, *ibid.* "Assurance is produced in our souls by the reflective acts of faith; the Spirit helps us to reflect

Spirit," in the Scripture. It is very plain, that the seal of the Spirit is the same thing with the earnest of the Spirit: "Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." "In whom, after that ye believe, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." Now the earnest is part of the money agreed for, given in hand, as a token of the whole, to be paid in due time; a part of the promised inheritance, granted now, in token of full possession of the whole hereafter.—But surely that kind of communication of the Spirit of God,

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upon what hath been done by him formerly upon our hearts; hereby we know that we know him, 1 John ii. 3.—To know that we know, is a reflex act. Now it is impossible there should be a reflex, before there hath been a direct act. No man can have the evidence of his faith, before the habit is infused, and the vital act performed. The object matter, to which the Spirit seals, is his own sanctifying operation." Afterwards, *ibid.* he says, "Immediate ways of the Spirit's sealing are ceased. No man may now expect, by any new revelation, or sign from heaven, by any voice, or extraordinary inspiration, to have his salvation sealed; but must expect that mercy in God's ordinary way and method, searching the Scriptures, examining our own hearts, and waiting on the Lord in prayer. The learned Gerson gives an instance of one that had been long upon the borders of despair, and at last sweetly assured and settled. He answered, *Non ex nova aliqua revelatione;* not by any new revelation, but by subjecting my understanding to, and comparing my heart with the written word. And Mr. Roberts, in his Treatise of the Covenants, speaks of another that so vehemently panted after the sealings and assurances of the love of God to his soul, that for a long time he earnestly desired some voice from heaven; and sometimes, walking in the solitary fields, earnestly desired some miraculous voice from the trees or stones there. This was denied him; but in time, a better was afforded, in a scriptural way." Again, *ibid.* "This method of sealing, is beyond all other methods in the world. For in miraculous voices and inspirations, it is possible there may *subesse falsum*, be found some cheat, or impostures of the devil: but the Spirit's witness in the heart, suitable to the revelation in the Scripture, cannot deceive us."

which is of the nature of eternal glory, is the highest and most excellent kind of communication; something that is in its own nature spiritual, holy, and divine, and far from any thing that is common; and therefore high above any thing of the nature of inspiration, or revelation of hidden facts by suggestion of the Spirit of God, which many natural men have had. What is the earnest and beginning of glory, but grace itself, especially in the more lively and clear exercises of it? It is not prophecy, nor tongues, nor knowledge, but that more excellent divine thing, "charity that never faileth," which is a prelibation and beginning of the light, sweetness, and blessedness of heaven, that world of love or charity. It is grace that is the seed of glory, and dawning of glory in the heart, and therefore it is grace that is the earnest of the future inheritance. What is it that is the beginning or earnest of eternal life in the soul, but spiritual life? and what is that but grace? The inheritance that Christ has purchased for the elect, is the Spirit of God: not in any extraordinary gifts, but in his vital indwelling in the heart, exerting and communicating himself there in his own proper, holy, or divine nature; and this is the sum total of the inheritance that Christ purchased for the elect. For so are things constituted in the plan of our redemption, that the Father provides the Saviour, or purchaser, and the purchase is made of him; and the Son is the purchaser and the price; and the Holy Spirit is the great blessing or inheritance purchased, as is intimated, Gal. iii. 13, 14. and hence the Spirit is often spoken of as the sum of the

blessings promised in the gospel.* This inheritance was the grand legacy which Christ left his disciples and church, in his last will and testament.† This is the sum of the blessings of eternal life, which shall be given in heaven.‡ It is through the vital communications and indwelling of the Spirit, that the saints have all their light, life, holiness, beauty, and joy in heaven: and it is through the vital communications and indwelling of the same Spirit, that the saints have all light, life, holiness, beauty, and comfort on earth; but only communicated in less measure. And this vital indwelling of the Spirit in the saints, in this less measure, and small beginning, is, "the earnest of the Spirit, the earnest of the future inheritance, and the first-fruits of the Spirit," as the apostle calls it, Rom. viii. 22. where, by *the first-fruits of the Spirit*, the apostle undoubtedly means the same vital gracious principle that he speaks of in all the preceding part of the chapter, which he calls Spirit, and sets in opposition to flesh or corruption. Therefore this earnest of the Spirit, and first-fruits of the Spirit, which has been shown to be the same with the seal of the Spirit, is the vital gracious sanctifying communication and influence of the Spirit, and not any immediate suggestion or revelation of facts by the Spirit.§

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* Luke xxiv. 49. Acts. i. 4. Gal. iii. 14. Eph. i. 13.

† John xiv. xv. xvi.

‡ Compare John vii. 37—39. and iv. 14. with Rev. xxi. 6. and xxii. 1, 17.

§ "After a man is in Christ, not to judge by the work, is not to judge by the Spirit. For the apostle makes the earnest of the Spirit to be the seal.—Now earnest is part of the money bargained for; the beginning of heaven, of the light and life of it. He that sees not the Lord is his by that, sees no God his at all.

And indeed the apostle, when in Rom. viii. 16. he speaks of the Spirit's bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, does sufficiently explain himself, if his words were but attended to. What is here expressed is connected with the two preceding verses, as resulting from what the apostle had said there, as every reader may see. The three verses together are thus, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God." Here, what the apostle says, if we take it together, plainly shows, that what he has respect to, when he speaks of the Spirit's giving us witness or evidence that we are God's children, is his dwelling in us, and leading us, as a spirit of adoption, or spirit of a child, disposing us to behave towards God as to a Father. This is the witness or evidence the apostle speaks of, that we are children, that we have the spirit of children, or spirit of adoption. And what is that but the spirit of love? There are two kinds of spirits the apostle speaks of, the spirit of a slave, or the spirit of bondage, that is fear; and the spirit of a child, or spirit of adoption, and that is love. The apostle says, we have not received the spirit of bondage or of slaves, which is a spirit of fear; but we have received the more ingenuous noble spirit of

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Oh, therefore, do not look for a spirit without a word to reveal, nor a word to reveal without seeing and feeling of some work first. I thank the Lord, I do but pity those that think otherwise. If a sheep of Christ, oh, wonder not!"—*Shepard's Par.* P. I. p. 26.

children, a spirit of love, which naturally disposes us to go to God as children to a father, and behave towards God as children. And this is the evidence or witness which the Spirit of God gives us that we are children. This is the plain sense of the apostle; and so undoubtedly the apostle here is speaking of the very same way of casting out doubting and fear, and the spirit of bondage which the apostle John speaks of, 1 John iv. 18. namely, by the prevailing of love, that is the spirit of a child. The spirit of bondage works by fear, the slave fears the rod: but love cries, Abba, Father; it disposes us to go to God, and behave ourselves towards God as children; and it gives us clear evidence of our union to God as his children, and so casts out fear. So that it appears that the witness of the Spirit the apostle speaks of, is far from being any whisper, or immediate suggestion or revelation; but that gracious holy effect of the Spirit of God in the hearts of the saints, the disposition and temper of children, appearing in sweet childlike love to God, which casts out fear, or the spirit of a slave.

And the same thing is evident from all the context: it is plain the apostle speaks of the Spirit, over and over again, as dwelling in the hearts of the saints, as a gracious principle, set in opposition to the flesh or corruption: and so he does in the words that immediately introduce this passage we are upon, "For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh, ye shall live."

Indeed it is past doubt with me, that the apostle has a more special respect to the spirit of grace, or

the spirit of love, or spirit of a child, in its more lively actings; for it is perfect love, or strong love only, which so witnesses or evidences that we are children, as to cast out fear and wholly deliver from the spirit of bondage. The strong and lively exercises of a spirit of childlike, evangelical, humble love, to God, give clear evidence of the soul's relation to God as his child; which does very greatly and directly satisfy the soul. And though it be far from being true, that the soul in this case judges only by an immediate witness, without any sign or evidence; for it judges and is assured by the greatest sign and clearest evidence; yet in this case, the saint stands in no need of multiplied signs, or any long reasoning upon them. And though the sight of his relative union with God, and his being in his favour, is not without a medium, because he sees it by that medium, namely, his love; yet his sight of the union of his heart to God is immediate: love, the bond of union, is seen intuitively; the saint sees and feels plainly the union between his soul and God; it is so strong and lively, that he cannot doubt of it. And hence he is assured that he is a child. How can he doubt whether he stands in a childlike relation to God, when he plainly sees a childlike union between God and his soul, and hence does boldly, and as it were naturally and necessarily, cry, Abba, Father?

And whereas the apostle says, the Spirit bears witness with our spirits; by our spirit here, is meant our conscience, which is called the spirit of man: "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly." We elsewhere read of the witness of this spirit of ours:

" For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience." " And hereby do we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God."—When the apostle Paul speaks of the Spirit of God bearing witness with our spirit, he is not to be understood of two spirits, that are two separate, collateral, independent witnesses; but it is by one that we receive the witness of the other: the Spirit of God gives the evidence, by infusing and shedding abroad the love of God, the spirit of a child, in the heart: and our spirit, or our conscience, receives and declares this evidence for our rejoicing.

Many have been the mischiefs that have arisen from that false and delusive notion of the witness of the Spirit, that is a kind of inward voice, suggestion, or declaration from God to man, that he is beloved of him, and pardoned, elected, or the like, sometimes with, and sometimes without a text of scripture: and many have been the false and vain (though very high) affections that have arisen from hence. And it is to be feared that multitudes of souls have been eternally undone by it. I have therefore insisted the longer on this head.

CHAPTER II.

The first objective ground of gracious Affections, is the transcendently excellent and amiable nature of divine things, as they are in themselves; and not any conceived relation they bear to self, or self-interest.

I SAY, that the supremely excellent nature of divine things, is the first, or primary and original objective foundation of the spiritual affections of true saints; for I do not suppose that all relation which divine things bear to themselves, and their own particular interest, are wholly excluded from all influence in their gracious affections.—For this may have, and indeed has, a secondary and consequential influence in those affections that are truly holy and spiritual, as I shall show how by and by.

It was before observed, that the affection of love is as it were the fountain of all affection; and particularly, that Christian love is the fountain of all gracious affections: now the divine excellency and glory of God, and Jesus Christ, the word of God, the works of God, and the ways of God, &c. is the primary reason, why a true saint loves these things; and not any supposed interest that he has in them, or any conceived benefit that he has received from them, or shall receive from them, or any such imagined relation which they bear to his interest, that self-love can properly be said to be the first foundation of his love to these things.

Some say that all love arises from self-love; and that it is impossible in the nature of things, for any man to have any love to God, or any other being, but that love to himself must be the foundation of it. But I humbly suppose it is for want of consideration that they say so. They argue, that whoever loves God, and so desires his glory, or the enjoyment of him, he desires these things as his own happiness; the glory of God, and the beholding and enjoying his perfections, are considered as things agreeable to him, tending to make him happy: he places his happiness in them, and desires them as things, which (if they were obtained) would be delightful to him, or would fill him with delight and joy, and so make him happy. And so, they say, it is from self-love, or a desire of his own happiness, that he desires God should be glorified, and desires to behold and enjoy his glorious perfections. But then they ought to consider a little further, and inquire how the man came to place his happiness in God's being glorified, and in contemplating and enjoying God's perfections. There is no doubt, but that after God's glory, and the beholding his perfections, are become so agreeable to him, that he places his highest happiness in these things, then he will desire them, as he desires his own happiness. But how came these things to be so agreeable to him, that he esteems it his highest happiness to glorify God, &c.? Is not this the fruit of love? A man must first love God, or have his heart united to him, before he will esteem God's good his own, and before he will desire the glorifying and enjoying of God as his happiness. It is no strong arguing, that because

after a man has his heart united to God in love, as a fruit of this, he desires his glory and enjoyment as his own happiness, that therefore a desire of this happiness of his own must needs be the cause and foundation of his love; unless it be strong arguing, that because a father begat a son, that therefore his son certainly begat him. If after a man loves God, and has his heart so united to him, as to look upon God as his chief good, and on God's good as his own, it will be a consequence and fruit of this, that even self-love, or love to his own happiness, will cause him to desire the glorifying and enjoying of God; it will not thence follow, that this very exercise of self-love went before his love to God, and that his love to God was a consequence and fruit of that. Something else, entirely distinct from self-love, might be the cause of this, namely, a change made in the views of his mind, and relish of his heart; whereby he apprehends a beauty, glory, and supreme good, in God's nature, as it is in itself. This may be the thing that first draws his heart to him, and causes his heart to be united to him, prior to all considerations of his own interest or happiness, although after this, and as a fruit of this, he necessarily seeks his interest and happiness in God.

There is such a thing as a kind of love or affection that a man may have towards persons or things, which does properly arise from self-love; a preconceived relation to himself, or some respect already manifested by another to him, or some benefit already received or depended on, is truly the first foundation of his love, and what his affection does wholly arise from; and is what precedes any relish of, or

delight in the nature and qualities inherent in the being beloved, as beautiful and amiable. When the first thing that draws a man's benevolence to another, is the beholding those qualifications and properties in him, which appear to him lovely in themselves, and the subject of them, on this account, worthy of esteem and good-will, love arises in a very different manner, than when it first arises from some gift bestowed by another, or depended on from him, as a judge loves and favours a man that has bribed him; or from the relation he supposes another has to him, as a man who loves another, because he looks upon him as his child.—When love to another arises thus, it does truly and properly arise from self-love.

That kind of affection to God or Jesus Christ, which does thus properly arise from self-love, cannot be a truly gracious and spiritual love, as appears from what has been said already: for self-love is a principle entirely natural, and as much in the hearts of devils as angels; and therefore, surely nothing that is the mere result of it can be supernatural and divine, in the manner before described.* Christ plainly speaks of this kind of love, as what is nothing beyond the love of wicked men: "If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them." And the devil himself knew that that kind of respect to God which was so mercenary, as to be only for benefits received or depended on, (which is all one) is worthless in the sight of

* "There is a natural love to Christ, as to one that doth thee good, and for thine own ends; and spiritual for himself, whereby the Lord only is exalted."—*Shepard's Parable of the Ten Virgins*, Part I. p. 25.

God; otherwise he never would have made use of such a slander before God, against Job: "Doth Job serve God for nought? hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house?" &c.—Nor would God ever have implicitly allowed the objection to have been good, in case the accusation had been true, by allowing that that matter should be tried, and that Job should be so dealt with, that it might appear in the event, whether Job's respect to God was thus mercenary or not, and by putting the proof of the sincerity and goodness of his respect upon that issue.

It is unreasonable to think otherwise, than that the first foundation of a true love to God, is that whereby he is in himself lovely, or worthy to be loved, or the supreme loveliness of his nature. This is certainly what makes him chiefly amiable. What chiefly makes a man or any creature lovely, is his excellency; and so what chiefly renders God lovely, and must undoubtedly be the chief ground of true love, is his excellency. God's nature, or the divinity, is infinitely excellent; yea, it is infinite beauty, brightness, and glory itself. But how can that be true love of this excellent and lovely nature, which is not built on the foundation of its true loveliness?—how can that be true love of beauty and brightness, which is not for beauty and brightness' sake?—how can that be a true prizing of that which is in itself infinitely worthy and precious, which is not for the sake of its worthiness and preciousness? This infinite excellency of the divine nature, as it is in itself, is the true ground of all that is good in God in any respect; but how can a man truly and rightly love God, without loving him for that excellency in him, which is the

foundation of all that is in any respect good or desirable in him? they whose affection to good is founded first on his profitableness to them, their affection begins at the wrong end; they regard God only for the utmost limit of the stream of divine good, where it touches them, and reaches their interest; and have no respect to that infinite glory of God's nature, which is the original good, and the true fountain of all good, the first fountain of all loveliness of every kind, and so the first foundation of all true love.

A natural principle of self-love may be the foundation of great affections towards God and Christ, without seeing any thing of the beauty and glory of the divine nature. There is a certain gratitude that is a mere natural thing. Gratitude is one of the natural affections of the soul of man, as well as anger: and there is a gratitude that arises from self-love, very much in the same manner that anger does. Anger in men is an affection excited against another, or in opposition to another, for something in him that crosses self-love: gratitude is an affection one has to another, for loving, or gratifying him, or for something in him that suits self-love. And there may be a kind of gratitude, without any true or proper love: as there may be anger without any proper hatred, as in parents towards their children, that they may be angry with, and yet at the same time have a strong habitual love to them. This gratitude is the principle which is in exercise in wicked men, in that which Christ declares concerning them, in the 6th of Luke, where he says, sinners love those that love them; and which he declares concerning even the

publicans, who were some of the most carnal and profligate sort of men, Matth. v. 46. This is the very principle that is wrought upon by bribery, in unjust judges; and it is a principle that even the brute beasts do exercise—a dog will love his master that is kind to him. And we see in innumerable instances, that mere nature is sufficient to excite gratitude in men, or to affect their hearts with thankfulness to others for kindnesses received; and sometimes towards them, against whom at the same time they have an habitual enmity. Thus Saul was once and again greatly affected, and even dissolved with gratitude towards David, for sparing his life, and yet remained an habitual enemy to him. And as men, from mere nature, may be thus affected towards men; so they may towards God. There is nothing hinders, but that the same self-love may work after the same manner towards God as towards men. And we have manifest instances of it in Scripture: as indeed the children of Israel, who sang God's praises at the Red-Sea, but soon forgat God's works; and in Naaman the Syrian, who was greatly affected with the miraculous cure of his leprosy, so as to have his heart engaged thenceforward to worship the God that had healed him, and him only, excepting when it would expose him to be ruined in his temporal interest. So was Nebuchadnezzar greatly affected with God's goodness to him in restoring him to his reason and kingdom, after his dwelling with the beasts.

Gratitude being thus a natural principle, it renders ingratitude so much the more vile and heinous; because it shows a dreadful prevalence of wickedness, when it even overbears and suppresses the better

principles of human nature: as it is mentioned as an evidence of the high degree of the wickedness of many of the heathen, that they were without natural affection, Rom. ii. 31. But that the want of gratitude, or natural affection, are evidences of a high degree of vice, is no argument that all gratitude and natural affection has the nature of virtue, or saving grace.

Self-love, through the exercise of a mere natural gratitude, may be the foundation of a sort of love to God many ways. A kind of love may arise from a false notion of God, that men have been educated in, or have some way imbibed; as though he were only goodness and mercy, and not revenging justice; or as though the exercises of his goodness were necessary, and not free and sovereign; or as though his goodness were dependant on what is in them, and as it were constrained by them. Men on such grounds as these, may love a God of their own forming in their imaginations, when they are far from loving such a God as reigns in heaven.

Again, self-love may be the foundation of an affection in men towards God, through a great insensibility of their state with regard to God, and for want of conviction of conscience to make them sensible how dreadfully they have provoked God to anger; they have no sense of the heinousness of sin, as against God, and of the infinite and terrible opposition of the holy nature of God against it; and so having formed in their minds such a God as suits them, and thinking God to be such a one as themselves, who favours and agrees with them, they may like him very well, and feel a sort of love to him, when they are far from

loving the true God. And men's affections may be much moved towards God, from self-love, by some remarkable outward benefits received from God; as it was with Naaman, Nebuchadnezzar, and the children of Israel at the Red Sea.

Again, a very high affection towards God, may and often does arise in men, from an opinion of the favour and love of God to them, as the first foundation of their love to him. After awakenings and distress through fears of hell, they may suddenly get a notion, through some impression on their imagination, or immediate suggestion with or without texts of Scripture, or by some other means, that God loves them, and has forgiven their sins, and made them his children: and this is the first thing that causes their affections to flow towards God and Jesus Christ; and then after this, and upon this foundation, many things in God may appear lovely to them, and Christ may seem excellent. And if such persons are asked, whether God appears lovely and amiable in himself? they would perhaps readily answer, Yes; when indeed, if the matter be strictly examined, this good opinion of God was purchased and paid for before ever they afforded it, in the distinguishing and infinite benefits they imagined they received from God: and they allow God to be lovely in himself, no otherwise than that he has forgiven them, and accepted them, and loves them above most in the world, and has engaged to improve all his infinite power and wisdom in preferring, dignifying, and exalting them, and will do for them just as they would have him. When once they are firm in this apprehension, it is easy to own God and Christ to be lovely and glorious,

and to admire and extol them. It is easy for them to own Christ to be a lovely person, and the best in the world, when they are first firm in it, that he, though Lord of the universe, is captivated with love to them, and has his heart swallowed up in them, and prizes them far beyond most of their neighbours, and loved them from eternity, and died for them, and will make them reign in eternal glory with him in heaven. When this is the case with carnal men, their very lusts will make him seem lovely; pride itself will prejudice them in favour of that which they call Christ. Selfish proud man naturally calls that lovely that greatly contributes to his interest, and gratifies his ambition.

And as such persons begin, so they go on. Their affections are raised from time to time, primarily on this foundation of self-love and a conceit of God's love to them. Many have a false notion of communion with God, as though it were carried on by impulses, and whispers, and external representations, immediately made to their imagination. These things they often have; which they take to be manifestations of God's great love to them, and evidences of their high exaltation above others of mankind; and so their affections are often renewedly set a-going.

Whereas the exercises of true and holy love in the saints arise in another way. They do not first see that God loves them, and then see that he is lovely, but they first see that God is lovely, and that Christ is excellent and glorious, and their hearts are first captivated with this view, and the exercises of their love are wont from time to time to begin here, and to arise primarily from these views: and then,

consequentially, they see God's love, and great favour to them.* The saint's affections begin with God; and self-love has a hand in these affections consequentially, and secondarily only. On the contrary, those false affections begin with self, and an acknowledgment of an excellency in God, and an affectedness with it, is only consequential and dependant. In the love of the true saint God is the lowest foundation; the love of the excellency of his nature is the foundation of all the affections which come afterwards, wherein self-love is concerned as an handmaid: on the contrary, the hypocrite lays himself at the bottom of all, as the first foundation, and lays on God as the superstructure; and even his acknowledgment of God's glory itself depends on his regard to his private interest.

Self-love may not only influence men, so as to cause them to be affected with God's kindness to them separately; but also with God's kindness to them, as parts of a community: as a natural principle of self-love, without any other principle, may be sufficient to make a man concerned for the interest of the nation to which he belongs: as for instance, in the present war, self-love may make natural men rejoice at the successes of our nation, and sorry for their disadvantages, they being concerned as members of the body. So the same natural principle may extend further, and even to the world of mankind, and might be affected with the benefits the inhabitants

* "There is a seeing of Christ after a man believes, which is Christ in his love, &c. But I speak of that first sight of him that precedes the second act of faith; and it is an intuitive, or real sight of him, as he is in his glory."—*Shepard's Parable of the Ten Virgins*, P. I. p. 74.

of the earth have, beyond those of the inhabitants of other planets, if we knew that such there were, and knew how it was with them. So this principle may cause men to be affected with the benefits that mankind have received beyond the fallen angels. And hence men, from this principle, may be much affected with the wonderful goodness of God to mankind, his great goodness in giving his Son to die for fallen man, and the marvellous love of Christ in suffering such great things for us, and with the great glory they hear God has provided in heaven for us; looking on themselves as persons concerned and interested, as being some of this species of creatures so highly favoured: the same principle of natural gratitude may influence men here, as in the case of personal benefits.

But these things that I have said do by no means imply that all gratitude to God is a mere natural thing, and that there is no such thing as a spiritual gratitude, which is a holy and divine affection: they imply no more, than that there is a gratitude which is merely natural, and that when persons have their affections towards God only or primarily for benefits received, their affection is only the exercise of a natural gratitude. There is, doubtless, such a thing as a gracious gratitude, which does greatly differ from all that gratitude which natural men experience. It differs in the following respects:—

1. True gratitude, or thankfulness to God for his kindness to us, arises from a foundation laid before, of love to God for what he is in himself; whereas a natural gratitude has no such antecedent foundation. The gracious stirrings of grateful affection to God,

for kindness received, always are from a stock of love already in the heart, established in the first place on other grounds, namely, God's own excellency; and hence the affections are disposed to flow out on occasions of God's kindness. The saint having seen the glory of God, and his heart overcome by it, and captivated into a supreme love to him on that account, his heart hereby becomes tender, and easily affected with kindnesses received. If a man has no love to another, yet gratitude may be moved by some extraordinary kindness; as in Saul towards David: but this is not the same kind of thing, as a man's gratitude to a dear friend, that his heart was before possessed with a high esteem of, and love to; whose heart by this means became tender towards him, and more easily affected with gratitude, and affected in another manner. Self-love is not excluded from a gracious gratitude; the saints love God for his kindness to them: "I love the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplication." But something else is included; and another love prepares the way, and lays the foundation for these grateful affections.

2. In a gracious gratitude, men are affected with the attribute of God's goodness and free grace, not only as they are concerned in it, or as it affects their interest, but as a part of the glory and beauty of God's nature. That wonderful and unparalleled grace of God, which is manifested in the work of redemption, and shines forth in the face of Jesus Christ, is infinitely glorious in itself, and appears so to the angels; it is a great part of the moral perfection and beauty of God's nature. This would be

glorious, whether it were exercised towards us or not: and the saint who exercises a gracious thankfulness for it, sees it to be so, and delights in it as such; though his concern in it serves the more to engage his mind, and raise the attention and affection: and self-love here assists as a handmaid, being subservient to higher principles, to lead forth the mind to the view and contemplation, and engage and fix the attention, and heighten the joy and love. God's kindness to them is a glass that God sets before them, wherein to behold the beauty of the attribute of God's goodness: the exercises and displays of this attribute, by this means, are brought near to them, and set right before them. So that in a holy thankfulness to God, the concern our interest has in God's goodness, is not the first foundation of our being affected with it; that was laid in the heart before, in that stock of love which was to God, for his excellency in himself, that makes the heart tender, and susceptive of such impressions from his goodness to us. Nor is our own interest, or the benefits we have received, the only, or the chief objective ground of the present exercises of the affection, but God's goodness, as part of the beauty of his nature; although the manifestations of that lovely attribute, set immediately before our eyes, in the exercises of it for us, be the special occasion of the mind's attention to that beauty, at that time, and serves to fix the attention, and heighten the affection.

Some may perhaps be ready to object against the whole that has been said, that text, "We love him because he first loved us," as though this implied that God's love to the true saints were the first foundation of their love to him.

In answer to this I would observe, that the apostle's drift in these words, is to magnify the love of God to us from hence, that he loved us, while we had no love to him; as will be manifest to any one who compares this verse and the two following verses with the 9th, 10th, and 11th verses. And that God loved us when we had no love to him, the apostle proves by this argument, that God's love to the elect is the ground of their love to him. And that it is three ways. 1. The saints' love to God is the fruit of God's love to them, as it is the gift of that love. God gave them a spirit of love to him, because he loved them from eternity. And in this respect God's love to his elect is the first foundation of their love to him, as it is the foundation of their regeneration, and the whole of their redemption. 2. The exercises and discoveries that God has made of his wonderful love to sinful men, by Jesus Christ in the work of redemption, is one of the chief manifestations which God has made of the glory of his moral perfection, to both angels and men; and so is one main objective ground of the love of both to God; in a good consistence with what was said before. 3. God's love to a particular elect person, discovered by his conversion, is a great manifestation of God's moral perfection and glory to him, and a proper occasion of the excitation of the love of holy gratitude, agreeable to what was before said. And that the saints do in these respects love God, because he first loved them, fully answers the design of the apostle's argument in that place. So that no good argument can be drawn from hence, against a spiritual and gracious love in the saints, arising primarily from the

excellency of divine things, as they are in themselves, and not from any conceived relation they bear to their interest.

And as it is with the love of the saints, so it is with their joy, and spiritual delight and pleasure: the first foundation of it is not any consideration or conception of their interest in divine things; but it primarily consists in the sweet entertainment their minds have in the view or contemplation of the divine and holy beauty of these things as they are in themselves. And this is indeed the very main difference between the joy of the hypocrite, and the joy of the true saint. The former rejoices in himself; self is the first foundation of his joy: the latter rejoices in God. The hypocrite has his mind pleased and delighted, in the first place, with his own privilege, and the happiness to which he supposes he has attained, or shall attain. True saints have their minds, in the first place, inexpressibly pleased and delighted with the sweet ideas of the glorious and amiable nature of the things of God. And this is the spring of all their delights, and the cream of all their pleasures; it is the joy of their joy. This sweet and ravishing entertainment, they have in the view of the beautiful and delightful nature of divine things, is the foundation of the joy that they have afterwards, in the consideration of their being theirs. But the dependence of the affections of hypocrites is in a contrary order: they first rejoice and are elevated with it, that they are made so much of by God; and then, on that ground, he seems lovely to them.

The first foundation of the delight a true saint has in God, is his own perfection; and the first

foundation of the delight he has in Christ, is his own beauty; he appears in himself the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. The way of salvation by Christ is a delightful way to him, for the sweet and admirable manifestations of the divine perfections in it: the holy doctrines of the gospel, by which God is exalted and man abased, holiness honoured and promoted, and sin greatly disgraced and discouraged, and free and sovereign love manifested, are glorious doctrines in his eyes, and sweet to his taste, prior to any conception of his interest in these things. Indeed, the saints rejoice in their interest in God, and that Christ is theirs; and so they have great reason: but this is not the first spring of their joy. They first rejoice in God as glorious and excellent in himself, and then, secondarily, rejoice in it, that so glorious a God is theirs. They first have their hearts filled with sweetness, from the view of Christ's excellency, and the excellency of his grace, and the beauty of the way of salvation by him, and then they have a secondary joy, in that so excellent a Saviour, and such excellent grace is theirs.* But

* Dr. Owen on the Spirit, p. 199. speaking of a common work of the Spirit, says, "The effects of this work on the mind, which is the first subject affected with it, proceeds not so far as to give it delight, complacency, and satisfaction, in the lovely spiritual nature and excellencies of the things revealed unto it. The true nature of saving illumination consists in this, that it gives the mind such a direct intuitive insight and prospect into spiritual things, as that in their own spiritual nature they suit, please, and satisfy it; so that it is transformed into them, cast into the mould of them, and rests in them; Rom. vi. 17. and xii. 2. 2 Cor. iii. 18. and iv. 6. This, the work we have insisted on, reacheth not unto. For notwithstanding any discovery that is made therein of spiritual things unto the mind, it finds not in immediate, direct, spiritual excellency in them; but only with

that which is the true saint's superstructure, is the hypocrite's foundation. When they hear of the wonderful things of the gospel, of God's great love in sending his Son, of Christ's dying love to sinners, and the great things Christ has purchased and promised to the saints, and hear these things lively and eloquently set forth; they may hear with a great deal of pleasure, and be lifted up with what they hear; but if their joy be examined, it will be found to have no other foundation than this, that they look upon these things as theirs: all this exalts them, they love to hear of the great love of Christ so vastly distinguishing some from others; for self-love, and even pride itself, makes them affect great distinction from others. No wonder, in this confident opinion of their own good estate, that they feel well under such doctrine, and are pleased, in the highest degree, in hearing how much God and Christ makes of them. So that their joy is really a joy in themselves, and not in God.

And because the joy of hypocrites is in themselves, hence it comes to pass, that in their rejoicings and elevations, they are wont to keep their eye upon themselves: having received what they call spiritual discoveries or experiences, their minds are taken up about them, admiring their own experiences;

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respect unto some benefit or advantage, which is to be attained by means thereof. It will not give such a spiritual insight into the mystery of God's grace by Jesus Christ, called *his glory shining in the face of Christ*, 2 Cor. iv. 6. as that the soul, in its first direct view of it, should, for what is in itself, admire it, delight in it, approve it, and find spiritual solace, with a refreshment, in it. But such a light, such a knowledge, it communicates, as that a man may like it well in its effects, as a way of mercy and salvation."

and what they are principally taken and elevated with, is not the glory of God, or beauty of Christ, but the beauty of their experiences. They keep thinking with themselves, What a good experience is this! what a great discovery is this! what wonderful thing have I met with! and so they put their experiences in the place of Christ, and his beauty and fulness; and instead of rejoicing in Christ Jesus, they rejoice in their admirable experiences; instead of feeding and feasting their souls in the view of what is without them, namely, the innate, sweet, refreshing, amiableness of the things exhibited in the gospel, their eyes are off from these things, or at least they view them only, as it were, sideways; but the object that fixes their contemplation, is their experience; and they are feeding their souls, and feasting a selfish principle with a view of their discoveries: they take more comfort in their discoveries than in Christ discovered, which is the true notion of living upon experiences and frames, and not a using experiences as the signs, on which they rely for evidence of their good estate, which some call living on experiences; though it be very observable, that some of them who do so, are most notorious for living upon experiences, according to the true notion of it.

The affections of hypocrites are very often after this manner; they are first much affected with some impression on their imagination, or some impulse, which they take to be an immediate suggestion, or testimony from God, of his love and their happiness, and high privilege in some respect, either with or without a text of Scripture: they are mightily taken with this, as a great discovery; and hence arise high

affections. And when their affections are raised, then they view those high affections, and call them great and wonderful experiences; and they have a notion that God is greatly pleased with those affections; and this affects them more; and so they are affected with their affections. And thus their affections rise higher and higher until they sometimes are perfectly swallowed up: and self-conceit, and a fierce zeal rises; and all is built like a castle in the air, on no other foundation but imagination, self-love, and pride.

And as the thoughts of such persons are, so is their talk; for out of the abundance of their heart their mouth speaketh. As in their high affections they keep their eye upon the beauty of their experiences, and greatness of their attainments, so they are great talkers about themselves. The true saint, when under great spiritual affections, from the fulness of his heart, is ready to be speaking much of God, and his glorious perfections and works, and of the beauty and amiableness of Christ, and the glorious things of the gospel; but hypocrites, in their high affections, talk more of the discovery, than they do of the thing discovered; they are full of talk about the great things they have met with, the wonderful discoveries they have had, how sure they are of the love of God to them, how safe their condition is, and how they know they shall go to heaven, &c.

A true saint, when in the enjoyment of true discoveries of the sweet glory of God and Christ, has his mind too much captivated and engaged by what he views without himself, to stand at that time to view himself, and his own attainments: it would be

a diversion and loss which he could not bear, to take off his eye from the ravishing object of his contemplation, to survey his own experience, and to spend time in thinking with himself, what a high attainment this is, and what a good story I now have to tell others. Nor does the pleasure and sweetness of his mind at that time chiefly arise from the consideration of the safety of his state, or any thing he has in view of his own qualifications, experiences, or circumstances; but from the divine and supreme beauty of what is the object of his direct view, without himself; which sweetly entertains, and strongly holds his mind.

As the love and joy of hypocrites are all from the source of self-love; so it is with their other affections, their sorrow for sin, their humiliation and submission, their religious desires and zeal: every thing is as it were paid for before-hand, in God's highly gratifying their self-love, and their lusts, by making so much of them, and exalting them so highly, as things that are in their imagination. It is easy for nature, corrupt as it is, under a notion of being already some of the highest favourites of heaven, and having a God who does so protect them and favour them in their sins, to love this imaginary God that suits them so well, and to extol him, and submit to him, and to be fierce and zealous for him. The high affections of many are all built on the supposition of their being eminent saints. If that opinion which they have of themselves were taken away, if they thought they were some of the lower form of saints, (though they should yet suppose themselves to be real saints,) their high affections would fall to

the ground. If they only saw a little of the sinfulness and vileness of their own hearts, and their deformity in the midst of their best duties and their best affections, it would knock their affections on the head: because their affections are built upon self, therefore self-knowledge would destroy them. But as to truly gracious affections, they are built elsewhere; they have there foundation out of self in God and Jesus Christ; and therefore a discovery of themselves, of their own deformity, and the meanness of their experiences, though it will purify their affections, yet it will not destroy them, but in some respect sweeten and heighten them.

CHAPTER III.

Those Affections that are truly holy, are primarily founded on the loveliness of the moral excellency of divine things. Or a love to divine things for the beauty and sweetness of their moral excellency, is the first beginning and spring of all holy Affections.

HERE, for the sake of the more illiterate reader, I will explain what I mean by the moral excellency of divine things.

And it may be observed, that the word *moral* is not to be understood here, according to the common and vulgar acceptation of the word, when men speak of morality, and a moral behaviour; meaning an outward conformity to the duties of the moral law, and

especially the duties of the second table; or intending no more at farthest, than such seeming virtues, as proceed from natural principles, in opposition to those virtues that are more inward, spiritual, and divine; as the honesty, justice, generosity, good nature, and public spirit of many of the heathen, are called moral virtues, in distinction from the holy faith, love, humility, and heavenly-mindedness of true Christians. I say, the word *moral* is not to be understood thus in this place.

But in order to a right understanding of what is meant, it must be observed, that divines commonly make a distinction between moral good and evil, and natural good and evil. By moral evil, they mean the evil of sin, or that evil which is against duty, and contrary to what is right and ought to be. By natural evil, they do not mean that evil which is properly opposed to duty; but that which is contrary to mere nature, without any respect to a rule of duty. So the evil of suffering is called natural evil, such as pain and torment, disgrace, and the like: these things are contrary to mere nature, contrary to the nature of both bad and good, hateful to wicked men and devils, as well as good men and angels. So likewise natural defects are called natural evils, as if a child be monstrous, or a natural fool: these are natural evils, but are not moral evils, because they have not properly the nature of the evil of sin. On the other hand, as by moral evil, divines mean the evil of sin, or that which is contrary to what is right; so by moral good, they mean that which is contrary to sin, or that good in beings who have will and choice, whereby, as voluntary agents, they are, and act, as

it becomes them to be and to act, or so as is most fit, and suitable, and lovely. By natural good, they mean that good that is entirely of a different kind from holiness or virtue, namely, that which perfects or suits nature, considering nature abstractly from any holy or unholy qualifications, and without any relation to any rule or measure of right and wrong.

Thus pleasure is a natural good; so is honour, so is strength; so is speculative knowledge, human learning, and policy. Thus there is a distinction to be made between the natural good that men are possessed of, and their moral good; and also between the natural and moral good of the angels in heaven: the great capacity of their understandings, and their great strength, and the honourable circumstances they are in as the great ministers of God's kingdom, whence they are called thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, is the natural good of which they are possessed; but their perfect and glorious holiness and goodness, their pure and flaming love to God, and to the saints, and one another, is their moral good. So divines make a distinction between the natural and moral perfections of God: by the moral perfections of God, they mean those attributes which God exercises as a moral agent, or whereby the heart and will of God are good, right, and infinitely becoming, and lovely; such as his righteousness, truth, faithfulness, and goodness; or in one word, his holiness. By God's natural attributes or perfections, they mean those attributes, wherein, according to our way of conceiving of God, consists, not in the holiness or moral goodness of God, but his greatness; such as his power, his knowledge whereby he knows all things, and his being eternal,

from everlasting to everlasting, his omnipresence, and his awful and terrible Majesty.

The moral excellency of an intelligent voluntary being is more immediately seated in the heart or will of moral agents. That intelligent being whose will is truly right and lovely, he is morally good or excellent.

This moral excellency of an intelligent being, when it is true and real, and not only external, or merely seeming and counterfeit, is holiness. Therefore holiness comprehends all the true moral excellency of intelligent beings: there is no other true virtue but real holiness. Holiness comprehends all the true virtue of a good man, his love to God, his gracious love to men, his justice, his charity, and bowels of mercies, his gracious meekness and gentleness, and all other true Christian virtues that he has, belong to his holiness. So the holiness of God in the more extensive sense of the word, and the sense in which the word is commonly, if not universally used concerning God in Scripture, is the same with the moral excellency of the divine nature, or his purity and beauty as a moral agent, comprehending all his moral perfections, his righteousness, faithfulness, and goodness. As in holy men, their charity, Christian kindness, and mercy, belong to their holiness, so the kindness and mercy of God belongs to his holiness. Holiness in man, is but the image of God's holiness: there are not more virtues belonging to the image than are in the original: derived holiness has not more in it than is in that underived holiness which is its fountain: there is no more than grace for grace, or grace in the image, answerable to grace in the original.

As there are two kinds of attributes in God, according to our way of conceiving of him, his moral attributes, which are summed up in his holiness, and his natural attributes, of strength, knowledge, &c. that constitute the greatness of God; so there is a twofold image of God in man, his moral or spiritual image, which is his holiness, that is the image of God's moral excellency; (which image was lost by the fall;) and God's natural image, consisting in man's reason and understanding, his natural ability, and dominion over the creatures, which is the image of God's natural attributes.

From what has been said, it may easily be understood what I intend, when I say that a love to divine things for the beauty of their moral excellency, is the beginning and spring of all holy affections. It has been already shown, under the former head, that the first objective ground of all holy affections is the supreme excellency of divine things as they are in themselves, or in their own nature: I now proceed further, and say more particularly, that that kind of excellency of the nature of divine things, which is the first objective ground of all holy affections, is their moral excellency, or their holiness. Holy persons, in the exercise of holy affections, do love divine things primarily for their holiness; they love God, in the first place, for the beauty of his holiness or moral perfection, as being supremely amiable in itself. Not that the saints, in the exercise of gracious affections, do love God only for his holiness; all his attributes are amiable and glorious in their eyes; they delight in every divine perfection; the contemplation of the infinite greatness, power and knowledge,

and terrible majesty of God, is pleasant to them. But their love to God for his holiness is what is most fundamental and essential in their love. Here it is that true love to God begins; all other holy love to divine things flow from hence: this is the most essential and distinguishing thing that belongs to a holy love to God, with regard to the foundation of it. A love to God for the beauty of his moral attributes, leads to, and necessarily causes a delight in God for all his attributes; for his moral attributes cannot be without his natural attributes: for infinite holiness supposes infinite wisdom, and an infinite capacity and greatness; and all the attributes of God do as it were imply one another.

The true beauty and loveliness of all intelligent beings does primarily and most essentially consist in their moral excellency or holiness. Herein consists the loveliness of the angels, without which, with all their natural perfections, their strength, and their knowledge, they would have no more loveliness than devils. It is a moral excellency alone, that it is in itself, and on its own account, the excellency of intelligent beings: it is this that gives beauty to, or rather is the beauty of their natural perfections and qualifications. Moral excellency is the excellency of natural excellencies. Natural qualifications are either excellent or otherwise, according as they are joined with moral excellency or not.—Strength and knowledge does not render any being lovely, without holiness, but more hateful; though they render them more lovely, when joined with holiness. Thus the elect angels are the more glorious for their strength and knowledge, because these natural perfections of

theirs are sanctified by their moral perfection. But though the devils are very strong, and of great natural understanding, they are not the more lovely: they are more terrible indeed, but not the more amiable; and, on the contrary, the more hateful. The holiness of an intelligent creature, is the beauty of all his natural perfections. And so it is in God, according to our way of conceiving of the Divine being: holiness is in a peculiar manner the beauty of the divine nature. Hence we often read of the beauty of holiness, Psal. xxix. 2. and xcvi. 9. and cx. 3. This renders all his other attributes glorious and lovely. It is the glory of God's wisdom, that it is a holy wisdom, and not a wicked subtlety and craftiness. This makes his majesty lovely, and not merely dreadful and horrible, that it is a holy majesty. It is the glory of God's immutability, that it is a holy immutability, and not an inflexible obstinacy in wickedness.

And therefore it must needs be, that a sight of God's loveliness must begin here. A true love to God must begin with a delight in his holiness, and not with a delight in any other attribute: for no other attribute is truly lovely without this, and no otherwise than as (according to our way of conceiving of God) it derives its loveliness from this; and therefore it is impossible that other attributes should appear lovely, in their true loveliness, until this is seen; and it is impossible that any perfection of the divine nature should be loved with true love until this is loved. If the true loveliness of all God's perfections arises from the loveliness of his holiness; then the true love of all his perfections arises from the love of his holiness. They that do not see the glory of

God's holiness, cannot see any thing of the true glory of his mercy and grace: they see nothing of the glory of those attributes, as any excellency of God's nature, as it is in itself; though they may be affected with them, and love them as they concern their interest: for these attributes are no part of the excellency of God's nature, as that is excellent in itself, any otherwise than as they are included in his holiness, more largely taken: or as they are a part of his moral perfection.

As the beauty of the divine nature does primarily consist in God's holiness, so does the beauty of all divine things. Herein consists the beauty of the saints, that they are saints, or holy ones: it is the moral image of God in them, which is their beauty; and that is their holiness. Herein consists the beauty and brightness of the angels of heaven, that they are holy angels, and so not devils.* Herein consists the beauty of the Christian religion, above all other religions, that it is so holy a religion. Herein consists the excellency of the word of God, that it is so holy: "Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.—I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.—Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous, and very faithful.—My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.—The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening

* Daniel iv. 13, 17, 23. Matt. xxv. 31. Mark viii. 38. Acts x. 22. Rev. xiv. 10.

the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb." Herein does primarily consist the amiableness and beauty of the Lord Jesus, whereby he is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely, even in that he is "the holy one of God," and "God's holy child," and "he that is holy, and he that is true." All the spiritual beauty of his human nature, consisting in his meekness, lowliness, patience, heavenliness, love to God, love to men, condescension to the mean and vile, and compassion to the miserable, &c. all is summed up in his holiness. And the beauty of his divine nature, of which the beauty of his human nature is the image and reflection, does also primarily consist in his holiness. Herein primarily consists the glory of the gospel, that it is a holy gospel, and so bright an emanation of the holy beauty of God and Jesus Christ; herein consists the spiritual beauty of its doctrines, that they are holy doctrines, or doctrines according to godliness. And herein does consist the spiritual beauty of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, that it is so holy a way. And herein chiefly consists the glory of heaven, that it is the holy city, the holy Jerusalem, the habitation of God's holiness, and so of his glory. All the beauties of the new Jerusalem, as it is described in the two last chapters of Revelations, are but various representations of this.

And therefore it is primarily on account of this kind of excellency, that the saints do love all these things. Thus they love the word of God, because

it is very pure. It is on this account they love the saints; and on this account chiefly it is, that heaven is lovely to them, and those holy tabernacles of God amiable in their eyes. It is on this account that they love God; and on this account primarily it is, that they love Christ, and that their hearts delight in the doctrines of the gospel, and sweetly acquiesce in the way of salvation therein revealed.*

Under the head of the first distinguishing characteristic of gracious affections, I observed, that there is given to those that are regenerated, a new supernatural sense, that is as it were a certain divine spiritual taste, which is in its whole nature diverse from any former kinds of sensation of the mind, as tasting is diverse from any of the other five senses, and that something is perceived by a true saint in the exercise of this new sense of mind, in spiritual and divine things, as entirely different from any thing that is perceived in them by natural men, as the sweet taste of honey is diverse from the ideas men get of honey by looking on it or feeling it; now the beauty of holiness, is that in spiritual and divine things, which

* "To the right closing with Christ's person, this is also required, to taste the bitterness of sin, as the greatest evil: else a man will never close with Christ, for his holiness in him, and from him, as the greatest good.—For we told you, that that is the right closing with Christ for himself, when it is for his holiness. For ask a whorish heart, what beauty he sees in the person of Christ; he will after he has looked over his kingdom, his righteousness, all his works, see a beauty in them, because they do serve his turn to comfort him only. Ask a virgin, he will see his happiness in all; but that which makes the Lord amiable is his holiness, which is in him to make him holy too. As in marriage, it is the personal beauty draws the heart. And hence I have thought it reason, that he that loves the brethren for a little grace, will love Christ much more."—*Shepard's Par.* P. I. p. 84.

is perceived by this spiritual sense that is so diverse from all that natural men perceive in them; this kind of beauty is the quality that is the immediate object of this spiritual sense; this is the sweetness that is the proper object of this spiritual taste. The Scripture often represents the beauty and sweetness of holiness as the grand object of a spiritual taste and spiritual appetite. This was the sweet food of the holy soul of Jesus Christ: "I have meat to eat that ye know not of.—My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." I know no part of the holy Scriptures, where the nature and evidences of true and sincere godliness are so fully and largely insisted on and delineated, as the 119th Psalm. The Psalmist declares his design in the first verse of the psalm, and he keeps his eye on this design all along, and pursues it to the end: but in this psalm the excellency of holiness is represented as the immediate object of a spiritual taste, relish, appetite, and delight in God's law; that grand expression and emanation of the holiness of God's nature, and prescription of holiness to the creature, is all along represented as the food and entertainment, and as the great object of the love, the appetite, the complacence and rejoicing of the gracious nature, which prizes God's commandments above gold, yea, the finest gold, and to which they are sweeter than the honey and honey-comb; and that upon account of their holiness. The same Psalmist declares, that this is the sweetness that a spiritual taste relishes in God's law: "The law of the Lord is perfect;—the commandment of the Lord is pure;—the fear of the Lord is clean;—the statutes of the Lord are right,

rejoicing the heart;—the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb."

A holy love has a holy object: the holiness of love consists especially in this, that it is the love of that which is holy, as holy, or for its holiness; so that it is the holiness of the object which is the quality on which it fixes and terminates. A holy nature must needs love that in holy things chiefly which is most agreeable to itself; but surely that in divine things, which above all others is agreeable to holy nature, is holiness, because holiness must be above all other things agreeable to holiness; for nothing can be more agreeable to any nature than itself; holy nature must be above all things agreeable to holy nature: and so the holy nature of God and Christ, and the word of God, and other divine things, must be above all other things agreeable to the holy nature that is in the saints.

And again, a holy nature doubtless loves holy things, especially on the account of that for which sinful nature has enmity against them; but that for which sinful nature chiefly is at enmity with holy things, is their holiness; it is for this that the carnal mind is enmity against God, and against the law of God, and the people of God. Now it is just arguing from contraries; from contrary causes to contrary effects; from opposite natures to opposite tendencies. We know that holiness is of a directly contrary nature to wickedness; as therefore it is the nature of wickedness chiefly to oppose and hate holiness, so it must be the nature of holiness chiefly to tend to, and delight in holiness.

The holy nature in the saints and angels in heaven (where the true tendency of it best appears) is principally engaged by the holiness of divine things. This is the divine beauty which chiefly engages the attention, admiration, and praise of the bright and burning seraphim: "One cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." And, "they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." So the glorified saints—"Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy."

And the Scriptures represent the saints on earth as adoring God primarily on this account, and admiring and extolling all God's attributes, either as deriving loveliness from his holiness, or as being a part of it. Thus when they praise God for his power, his holiness is the beauty that engages them: "O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory." So when they praise him for his justice and terrible majesty—"The Lord is great in Zion, and he is high above all people. Let them praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy." "Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy." "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions. Exalt ye the Lord our God and worship at his holy hill: for the Lord our God is holy." So when they praise God for his mercy and faithfulness: "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in

heart. Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." "There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee; neither is there any rock like our God."

By this therefore all may try their affections, and particularly their love and joy. Various kinds of creatures show the difference of their nature, very much in the different things they relish as their proper good, one delighting in that which another abhors. Such a difference is there between true saints, and natural men: natural men have no sense of the goodness and excellency of holy things, at least for their holiness; they have no taste for that kind of good; and so may be said not to know that divine good, or not to see it; it is wholly hid from them: but the saints, by the mighty power of God, have it discovered to them; they have that supernatural, most noble and divine sense given them, by which they perceive it; and it is this that captivates their hearts, and delights them above all things; it is the most amiable and sweet thing to the heart of a true saint, that is to be found in heaven or earth; that which above all others attracts and engages his soul; and that wherein, above all things, he places his happiness, and which he rests upon for solace and entertainment to his mind, in this world, and full satisfaction and blessedness in another. By this you may examine your love to God, and to Jesus Christ, and to the word of God, and your joy in them, and also your love to the people of God, and your desires after heaven; whether they be from a supreme delight in this sort of beauty, without being primarily moved from your imagined interest in them, or expectations

from them. There are many high affections, great seeming love and rapturous joys, which have nothing of this holy relish belonging to them.

By what has been said, you may try your discoveries of the glory of God's grace and love, and your affections arising from them. The grace of God may appear lovely two ways; either as a profitable good to me, that which greatly serves my interest, and so suits my self-love; or as a beautiful good in itself, and part of the moral and spiritual excellency of the divine nature. In this latter respect it is that the true saints have their hearts affected and love captivated, by the free grace of God, in the first place.

From what has been said, it appears, that if persons have a great sense of the natural perfections of God, and are greatly affected with them, or have any other sight or sense of God than that which consists in, or implies a sense of, the beauty of his moral perfections, it is no certain sign of grace: as, particularly, men's having a great sense of the awful greatness and terrible majesty of God; for this is only God's natural perfection, and what men may see, and yet be entirely blind to the beauty of his moral perfection, and have nothing of that spiritual taste which relishes this divine sweetness.

It has been shown already, in what was said upon the first distinguishing mark of gracious affections, that that which is spiritual, is entirely different in its nature from all that it is possible any graceless person should be the subject of, while he continues graceless. But it is possible, that those who are wholly without grace should have a clear sight, and very great and affecting sense, of God's greatness, his mighty power,

and awful majesty; for this is what the devils have, though they have lost the spiritual knowledge of God, consisting in a sense of the amiableness of his moral perfections: they are perfectly destitute of any sense or relish of that kind of beauty, yet they have a very great knowledge of the natural glory of God, (if I may so speak,) or his awful greatness and majesty; this they behold and are affected with the apprehensions of, and therefore tremble before him. This glory of God all shall behold at the day of judgment: God will make all rational beings to behold it to a great degree indeed, angels and devils, saints and sinners: Christ will manifest his infinite greatness and awful majesty to every one, in a most open, clear, and convincing manner, and in a light that none can resist, "when he shall come in the glory of his Father, and every eye shall see him;" when they shall cry to the mountains to fall upon them, to hide them from the face of him that sits upon the throne, they are represented as seeing the glory of God's majesty. God will make all his enemies to behold this, and to live, in a most clear and affecting view of it, in hell, to all eternity. God hath often declared his immutable purpose to make all his enemies to know him in this respect, in so often annexing these words to the threatenings he denounces against them—"And they shall know that I am the Lord;" yea, he hath sworn that all men shall see his glory in this respect—"As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." And this kind of manifestation of God is very often spoken of, in Scripture, as made, or to be made, in the sight of God's enemies in this

world: Exod. ix. 16. and xiv. 18. and xv. 16. Psalm lxvi. 3. and xlvi. 10. and in many other places. This was a manifestation which God made of himself in the sight of that wicked congregation at Mount Sinai; deeply affecting them with it; so that all the people in the camp trembled. Wicked men and devils will see, and have a great sense of every thing that appertains to the glory of God, excepting the beauty of his moral perfection. They will see his infinite greatness and majesty, his infinite power, and will be fully convinced of his omniscience, and his eternity and immutability; and they will see and know every thing appertaining to his moral attributes themselves, excepting the beauty and amiableness of them: they will see and know that he is perfectly just, and righteous, and true; that he is a holy God, of purer eyes than to behold evil, who cannot look on iniquity; and they will see the wonderful manifestations of his infinite goodness and free grace to the saints; and there is nothing will be hid from their eyes, but only the beauty of these moral attributes, and that beauty of the other attributes, which arises from it. And so natural men in this world are capable of having a very affecting sense of every thing else that appertains to God, but this only. Nebuchadnezzar had a great and very affecting sense of the infinite greatness and awful majesty of God, of his supreme and absolute dominion, and mighty and irresistible power, and of his sovereignty, and that he, and all the inhabitants of the earth were nothing before him; and also had a great conviction in his conscience of his justice, and an affecting sense of his great goodness. And the sense that Darius had of

God's perfections, seems to be very much like his. But the saints and angels do behold the glory of God consisting in the beauty of his holiness: and it is this sight only that will melt and humble the hearts of men, and wean them from the world, and draw them to God, and effectually change them. A sight of the awful greatness of God may overpower men's strength, and be more than they can endure; but if the moral beauty of God be hid, the enmity of the heart will remain in its full strength, no love will be enkindled, all will not be effectual to gain the will, but that will remain inflexible; whereas the first glimpse of the moral and spiritual glory of God shining into the heart, produces all these effects as it were with an omnipotent power, which nothing can withstand.

The sense that natural men may have of the awful greatness of God may affect them various ways; it may not only terrify them, but it may elevate them, and raise their joy and praise, as their circumstances may be. This will be the natural effect of it, under the real or supposed receipt of some extraordinary mercy from God, by the influence of mere principles of nature. It has been shown already, that the receipt of kindness may, by the influence of natural principles, affect the heart with gratitude and praise to God: but if a person, at the same time that he receives remarkable kindness from God, has a sense of his infinite greatness, and that he is but nothing in comparison of him, surely this will naturally raise his gratitude and praise the higher, for kindness to one so much inferior. A sense of God's greatness had this effect upon Nebuchadnezzar under the re-

ceipt of that extraordinary favour of his restoration, after he had been driven from men, and had his dwelling with the beasts: a sense of God's exceeding greatness raises his gratitude very high; so that he does in the most lofty terms, extol and magnify God, and calls upon all the world to do it with him; and much more, if a natural man, at the same time that he is greatly affected with God's infinite greatness and majesty, entertains a strong conceit that this great God has made him his child and special favourite, and promised him eternal glory in his highest love, will this have a tendency, according to the course of nature, to raise his joy and praise to a great height.

Therefore, it is beyond doubt, that too much weight has been laid, by many persons of late, on discoveries of God's greatness, awful majesty, and natural perfection, operating after this manner, without any real view of the holy, lovely majesty of God. And experience does abundantly witness to what reason and Scripture declare as to this matter; there having been very many persons, who have seemed to be overpowered with the greatness and majesty of God, and consequently elevated in the manner that has been spoken of, who have been very far from having appearances of a Christian spirit and temper, in any manner of proportion, or fruits in practice in any wise agreeable; but their discoveries have worked in a way contrary to the operation of truly spiritual discoveries.

Not that a sense of God's greatness and natural attributes is not exceedingly useful and necessary. For, as I observed before, this is implied in a manifestation of the beauty of God's holiness. Though

that be something beyond it, it supposes it, as the greater supposes the less. And though natural men may have a sense of the natural perfections of God; yet undoubtedly this is more frequent and common with the saints, than with natural men; and grace tends to enable men to see these things in a better manner, than natural men do; and not only enables them to see God's natural attributes, but that beauty of those attributes, which (according to our way of conceiving of God) is derived from his holiness.

CHAPTER IV.

Gracious Affections arise from the mind's being enlightened, richly and spiritually to understand or apprehend divine things.

Holy affections are not heat without light; but evermore arise from the information of the understanding, some spiritual instruction that the mind receives, some light or actual knowledge. The child of God is graciously affected, because he sees and understands something more of divine things than he did before; more of God or Christ, and of the glorious things exhibited in the gospel; he has some clearer and better view than he had before, when he was not affected: either he receives some understanding of divine things that is new to him, or has his former knowledge renewed after the view was decayed: "Every one that loveth, knoweth God." "I pray that your love may abound more and more in

knowledge, and in all judgment." "They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." "The new man, which is renewed in knowledge." "O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill." "It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me." Knowledge is the key that first opens the hard heart and enlarges the affections, and so opens the way for men into the kingdom of heaven: "Ye have taken away the key of knowledge."

Now there are many affections which do not arise from any light in the understanding. And when it is thus it is a sure evidence that these affections are not spiritual, let them be ever so high.*

* "Many that have had mighty strong affections at first conversion, afterwards become dry, and wither, and consume, and pine, and die away: and now their hypocrisy is manifest; if not to all the world by open profaneness, yet to the discerning eye of living Christians, by a formal, barren, unsavoury, unfruitful heart and course; because they never had light to conviction enough as yet.—It is strange to see some people carried with mighty affection against sin and hell, and after Christ. And what is the hell you fear? A dreadful place. What is Christ? They scarce know so much as devils do, but that is all. Oh, trust them not! Many have, and these will fall away to some lust, or opinion, or pride, or world; and the reason is, they never had light enough, John v. 35. John was a burning and shining light, and they did joy in him for a season: yet, glorious as it was, they saw not Christ by it, especially not with divine light. It is rare to see Christians full both of light and affection. And therefore consider of this; many a man has been well brought up, and is of a sweet loving nature, mild and gentle, and harmless, likes and loves the best things, and his meaning, and mind, and heart is good, and has more in heart than in show; and so hopes all shall go well with him. I say, there may lie greatest hypocrisy under greatest affections, especially if they want light. You shall be hardened in your hypocrisy by them. I never liked violent affections and pangs, but only such as were dropped in by light; because those come from

they have some new apprehensions which they had not before. Such is the nature of man, that it is impossible his mind should be affected, unless it be by something that he apprehends, or of which his mind conceives. But in many persons those apprehensions or conceptions that they have, wherewith they are affected, have nothing of the nature of knowledge or instruction in them. As, for instance, when a person is affected with a lively idea, suddenly excited in his mind of some shape, or very beautiful pleasant form of countenance, or some shining light, or other glorious outward appearance: here is something apprehended or conceived by the mind, but there is nothing of the nature of instruction in it; persons become never the wiser by such things, or more knowing about God, or a mediator between God and man, or the way of salvation by Christ, or any thing contained in any of the doctrines of the gospel. Persons, by these external ideas, have no further acquaintance with God, as to any of the attributes or perfections of his nature; nor have they any further understanding of his word, or any of his ways or works. Truly spiritual and gracious affections are not raised after this manner; these arise from the enlightening of the understanding to understand the things that are taught of God and Christ, in a new manner, the coming to a new understanding of the excellent nature of God, and his wonderful perfections, some new view of Christ in his spiritual excellencies and fulness, or things opened to him

an external principle, and last not, but these do. Men are not affrighted by the light of the sun, though clearer than the lightning."—*Shepard's Parable*, Part I. p. 146.

in a new manner, that appertain to the way of salvation by Christ, whereby he now sees how it is, and understands those divine and spiritual doctrines which once were foolishness to him. Such enlightenings of the understanding as these, are things entirely different in their nature, from strong ideas of shapes and colours, and outward brightness and glory, or sounds and voices. That all gracious affections do arise from some instruction or enlightening of the understanding, is therefore a further proof, that affections which arise from such impressions on the imagination, are not gracious affections.

Hence also it appears, that affections arising from texts of Scripture coming to the mind are vain, when no instruction received in the understanding from those texts, or any thing taught in those texts, is the ground of the affection, but the manner of their coming to the mind. When Christ makes the Scripture a means of the heart's burning with gracious affection, it is by opening the Scriptures to their understandings: "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" It appears, also, that the affection which is occasioned by the coming of a text of Scripture must be vain, when the affection is founded on something that is supposed to be taught by it, which really is not contained in it, nor in any other scripture; because such supposed instruction is not real instruction, but a mistake and misapprehension of the mind. As, for instance, when persons suppose that they are expressly taught, by some scripture coming to their minds, that they are in particular beloved of God,

or that their sins are forgiven, that God is their Father, and the like, this is a mistake or misapprehension; for the Scripture no where reveals the individual persons who are beloved expressly; but only by consequence, by revealing the qualifications of persons that are beloved of God: and therefore, this matter is not to be learned from Scripture by any other way than by consequence, and from these qualifications; for things are not to be learned from the Scripture any other way than they are taught in the Scripture.

Affections really arise from ignorance, rather than instruction, in those instances which have been mentioned; as likewise in some others that might be mentioned. As some when they find themselves free of speech in prayer, they call it God's being with them; and this affects them more; and so their affections are set agoing and increased; when they look not into the cause of this freedom of speech, which may arise many other ways besides God's spiritual presence. So some are much affected with some apt thoughts that come into their minds about the Scripture, and call it the Spirit of God teaching them. So they ascribe many of the workings of their own minds, of which they have a high opinion, and are pleased and taken with, to the special, immediate influences of God's Spirit; and so are mightily affected with their privilege. And there are some instances of persons, in whom it seems manifest, that the first ground of their affection is some bodily sensation. The animal spirits, by some cause, (and probably sometimes by the devil,) are suddenly and unaccountably put into a very agreeable motion, causing persons to

feel pleasantly in their bodies; the animal spirits are put into such a motion as is wont to be connected with the exhilaration of the mind; and the soul, by the laws of the union of soul and body, hence feels pleasure. The motion of the animal spirits does not first arise from any affection or apprehension of the mind whatsoever; but the very first thing that is felt is an exhilaration of the animal spirits, and a pleasant external sensation it may be in their breasts. Hence, through ignorance, the person being surprised, begins to think, surely this is the Holy Ghost coming into him. And then the mind begins to be affected and raised: there is first great joy; and then many other affections, in a very tumultuous manner, putting all nature, both body and mind, into a mighty ruffle. For though, as I observed before, it is the soul only that is the seat of the affections; yet this hinders not but that bodily sensations may, in this manner, be an occasion of affections in the mind.

And if men's religious affections do truly arise from some instruction or light in the understanding; yet the affection is not gracious, unless the light which is the ground of it be spiritual. Affections may be excited by that understanding of things, which they obtain merely by human teaching, with the common improvement of the faculties of the mind. Men may be much affected by knowledge of things of religion that they obtain this way; as some philosophers have been mightily affected, and almost carried beyond themselves, by the discoveries they have made in mathematics and natural philosophy. So men may be much affected from common illuminations of the Spirit of God, in which God assists men's faculties

to a greater degree in the understanding of religious matters, which they have in some degree, by only the ordinary exercise and improvement of their own faculties. Such illuminations may much affect the mind, as in many whom we read of in Scripture that were once enlightened; but these affections are not spiritual.

There is such a thing, if the Scriptures are of use to teach us any thing, as a spiritual, supernatural understanding of divine things, that is peculiar to the saints, and of which those who are not saints have nothing. It is certainly a kind of understanding, apprehending, or discerning of divine things, that natural men have nothing of, of which the apostle speaks: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." It is certainly a kind of seeing or discerning spiritual things peculiar to the saints, which is spoken of: "Whosoever sinneth, hath not seen him, neither known him." "He that doth evil hath not seen God." "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." "The world seeth me no more; but ye see me." "This is eternal life, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." "He that seeth me, seeth him that sent me." "They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee." "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." "That

I may know him." And innumerable other places there are in the Bible, which show the same. And that there is such a thing as an understanding of divine things, which, in its nature and kind, is wholly different from all knowledge that natural men have, is evident from this, that there is an understanding of divine things which the Scripture calls spiritual understanding: "We do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." It has been already shown, that that which is spiritual, in the ordinary use of the word in the New Testament, is entirely different in nature and kind from all which natural men are, or can be the subjects of.

From hence it may be surely inferred wherein spiritual understanding consists. For if there be in the saints a kind of apprehension or perception, which is in its nature perfectly diverse from all that natural men have, or that it is possible they should have, until they have a new nature; it must consist in their having a certain kind of ideas or sensations of mind, which are simply diverse from all that is or can be in the minds of natural men. And that is the same thing as to say, that it consists in the sensations of a new spiritual sense, which the souls of natural men have not. But I have already shown what that new spiritual sense is, which the saints have given them in regeneration, and what is the object of it. I have shown, that the immediate object of it is the supreme beauty and excellency of the nature of divine things, as they are in themselves. And this is agreeable to the Scripture: the

apostle very plainly teaches, that the great thing discovered by spiritual light, and understood by spiritual knowledge, is the glory of divine things: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto him." "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." "But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." And it must needs be so, for, as has been before observed, the Scripture often teaches, that all true religion summarily consists in the love of divine things. And therefore, that kind of understanding or knowledge, which is the proper foundation of true religion, must be the knowledge of the loveliness of divine things. For, doubtless, that knowledge which is the proper foundation of love, is the knowledge of loveliness. What that beauty of divine things is, which is the proper and immediate object of a spiritual sense of mind, was shown under the last head insisted on, namely, that it is the beauty of their moral perfection. Therefore it is in the view or sense of this, that spiritual understanding more immediately and primarily consists. And indeed it is plain it can be nothing else; for (as has been shown) there is nothing pertaining to divine things, besides the beauty of their moral excellency, and those properties and qualities of

divine things, of which this beauty is the foundation, but what natural men and devils can see and know, and will know fully and clearly to all eternity.

From what has been said, therefore, we come necessarily to this conclusion, concerning that wherein spiritual understanding consists; namely, that it consists in "a sense of the heart, of the supreme beauty and sweetness of the holiness or moral perfection of divine things, together with all that discerning and knowledge of things of religion, that depends upon, and flows from such a sense."

Spiritual understanding consists primarily in a sense of heart of that spiritual beauty. I say, a sense of heart; for it is not speculation merely that is concerned in this kind of understanding; nor can there be a clear distinction made between the two faculties of understanding and will, as acting distinctly and separately in this matter. When the mind is sensible of the sweet beauty and amiableness of a thing, that implies a sensibleness of sweetness and delight in the presence of the idea of it: and this sensibleness of the amiableness or delightfulness of beauty, carries, in the very nature of it, the sense of the heart; or an effect and impression the soul is the subject of, as a substance possessed of taste, inclination, and will.

There is a distinction to be made between a mere notional understanding, wherein the mind only beholds things in the exercise of a speculative faculty; and the sense of the heart, wherein the mind does not only speculate and behold, but relishes and feels. That sort of knowledge, by which a man has a sensible perception of amiableness and loathsomeness, or

of sweetness and nauseousness, is not just the same sort of knowledge with that by which he knows what a triangle, and what a square is. The one is mere speculative knowledge, the other sensible knowledge, in which more than the mere intellect is concerned; the heart is the proper subject of it, or the soul as a being that not only beholds, but has inclination, and is pleased or displeased. And yet there is the nature of instruction in it; as he that has perceived the sweet taste of honey, knows much more about it than he that has only looked upon and felt of it.

The apostle seems to make a distinction between mere speculative knowledge of the things of religion, and spiritual knowledge, in calling that *the form of knowledge and of the truth*—"Which hath the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law." The latter is often represented by relishing, smelling, or tasting: "Now thanks be to God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ Jesus, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge in every place." "Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those things that be of men." "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the virgins love thee." "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."

Spiritual understanding primarily consists in this sense or taste of the moral beauty of divine things; so that no knowledge can be called spiritual, any farther than it arises from this, and has this in it. But secondarily, it includes all that discerning and

knowledge of things of religion, which depends upon and flows from such a sense.

When the true beauty and amiableness of the holiness, or true moral good, that is in divine things, is discovered to the soul, it as it were opens a new world to its views. This shows the glory of all the perfections of God, and of every thing appertaining to the Divine Being. For, as was observed before, the beauty of all arises from God's moral perfection. This shows the glory of all God's works, both of creation and providence. For it is the special glory of them, that God's holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, and goodness, are so manifested in them; and without these moral perfections, there would be no glory in that power and skill with which they are wrought. The glorifying of God's moral perfections, is the special end of all the works of God's hands. By this sense of the moral beauty of divine things, is understood the sufficiency of Christ as a Mediator; for it is only by the discovery of the beauty of the moral perfection of Christ, that the believer is let into the knowledge of the excellency of his person, so as to know any thing more of it than the devils do; and it is only by the knowledge of the excellency of Christ's person, that any know his sufficiency as a Mediator; for the latter depends upon, and arises from the former. It is by seeing the excellency of Christ's person, that the saints are made sensible of the preciousness of his blood, and its sufficiency to atone for sin: for therein consists the preciousness of Christ's blood, that it is the blood of so excellent and amiable a person. And on this depends the meritoriousness of his obedience, and sufficiency and

prevalence of his intercession. By this sight of the moral beauty of divine things, is seen the beauty of the way of salvation by Christ; for that consists in the beauty of the moral perfections of God, which wonderfully shines forth in every step of this method of salvation, from beginning to end. By this is seen the fitness and suitableness of this way; for this wholly consists in its tendency to deliver us from sin and hell, and to bring us to the happiness which consists in the possession and enjoyment of moral good, in a way sweetly agreeing with God's moral perfections. And in the way being contrived so as to attain these ends, consists the excellent wisdom of that way. By this is seen the excellency of the word of God. Take away all the moral beauty and sweetness in the word, and the Bible is left wholly a dead letter, a dry, lifeless, tasteless thing. By this is seen the true foundation of our duty, the worthiness of God to be so esteemed, honoured, loved, submitted to, and served, as he requires of us, and the amiablenesss of the duties themselves that are required of us. And by this is seen the true evil of sin: for he who sees the beauty of holiness, must necessarily see the hatefulness of sin, its contrary. By this, men understand the true glory of heaven, which consists in the beauty and happiness that is in holiness. By this is seen the amiableness and happiness of both saints and angels. He that sees the beauty of holiness, or true moral good, sees the greatest and most important thing in the world, which is the fulness of all things, without which all the world is empty, no better than nothing, yea, worse than nothing. Unless this is seen, nothing is

seen that is worth the seeing; for there is no other true excellency or beauty. Unless this be understood, nothing is understood that is worthy of the exercise of the noble faculty of understanding. This is the beauty of the Godhead, and the divinity of divinity, (if I may so speak,) the good of the infinite fountain of good; without which God himself (if that were possible to be) would be an infinite evil; without which, we ourselves had better never had been; and without which there had better have been no being. He therefore in effect knows nothing, that knows not this; his knowledge is but the shadow of knowledge, or the form of knowledge, as the apostle calls it. Well therefore may the Scriptures represent those who are destitute of that spiritual sense, by which is perceived the beauty of holiness, as totally blind, deaf, and senseless, yea, dead. And well may regeneration, in which this divine sense is given to the soul by its Creator, be represented as opening the blind eyes, and raising the dead, and bringing a person into a new world. For if what has been said be considered, it will be manifest, that when a person has this sense and knowledge given him, he will view nothing as he did before; though before he knew all things "after the flesh, yet henceforth he will know them so no more; and he is become a new creature, old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new."

And besides the things that have been already mentioned, there arises from the sense of spiritual beauty, a true experimental knowledge of religion, which is of itself, as it were, a new world of knowledge. He that sees not the beauty of holiness,

knows not what one of the graces of God's Spirit is, he is destitute of any idea or conception of all gracious exercises of soul, and all holy comforts and delights, and all effects of the saving influences of the Spirit of God on the heart; and so is ignorant of the greatest works of God, the most important and glorious effects of his power upon the creature: and also is wholly ignorant of the saints as saints, he knows not what they are; and in effect is ignorant of the whole spiritual world.

Things being thus, it plainly appears that God's implanting that spiritual supernatural sense which has been spoken of, makes a great change in a man. And were it not for the very imperfect degree in which this sense is commonly given at first, or the small degree of this glorious light that first dawns upon the soul, the change made by this spiritual opening of the eyes in conversion, would be much greater, and more remarkable every way, than if a man, who had been born blind, and with only the other four senses, should continue so long a time, and then at once should have the sense of seeing imparted to him, in the midst of the clear light of the sun, discovering a world of visible objects. For though sight be more noble than any of the other external senses, yet this spiritual sense which has been spoken of, is infinitely more noble than that or any other principle of discerning that a man naturally has, and the object of this sense infinitely greater and more important.

This sort of understanding or knowledge, is that knowledge of divine things from whence all truly gracious affections do proceed; by which therefore

all affections are to be tried. Those affections that arise wholly from any other kind of knowledge, or do result from any other kind of apprehensions of mind, are vain.*

From what has been said, may be learned wherein the most essential difference lies, between that light or understanding which is given by the common influences of the Spirit of God, on the hearts of natural men, and that saving instruction which is given to the saints. The latter, primarily and most essentially, lies in beholding the holy beauty that is in divine things; which is the only true moral good, and to which the soul of fallen man is by nature to-

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* "Take heed of contenting yourself with every kind of knowledge. Do not worship every image of your own heads; especially you that fall short of truth, or the knowledge of it. For when you have some, there may be yet that wanting which may make you sincere. There are many men of great knowledge, able to teach themselves, and others too; and yet their hearts are unsound. How comes this to pass? Is it because they have so much light? No; but because they want much. And therefore content not yourselves with every knowledge. There is some knowledge which men have by the light of nature, (which leaves them without excuse,) from the book of creation; some by power of education; some by the light of the law, whereby men know their sins and evils; some by the letter of the gospel: and so men may know much, and speak well; and so in seeing, see not; some by the Spirit, and may see much, so as to prophecy in Christ's name, and yet bid depart. Matth. vii.—Now there is a light of glory, whereby the elect see things in another manner: to tell you how, they cannot; it is the beginning of light in heaven; and the same Spirit that fills Christ, filling their minds, that they know, by this anointing, all things; which if ever you have, you must become babes and fools in your own eyes. God will never write his law in your minds, until all the scribblings of it are blotted out. Account all your knowledge loss for the gaining of this. It is a sad thing to see many a man pleasing himself in his own dreaming delusions; yet the poor creature in seeing, sees not; which is God's heavy curse upon men under greatest means, and which lays all waste and desolate."—*Shepard's Par.* Part I. p. 147.

tally blind. The former consists only in a further understanding, through the assistance of natural principles, of those things which men may know, in some measure, by the alone ordinary exercise of their faculties. And this knowledge consists only in the knowledge of those things pertaining to religion, which are natural. Thus, for instance, in those awakenings and convictions of conscience that natural men are often subject to, the Spirit of God gives no knowledge of the true moral beauty which is in divine things; but only assists the mind to a clearer idea of the guilt of sin, or its relation to a punishment, and connection with the evil of suffering, (without any sight of its true moral evil, or odiousness as sin,) and a clearer idea of the natural perfections of God, wherein consists, not his holy beauty and glory, but his awful and terrible greatness. It is a clear sight of this, that will fully awaken the consciences of wicked men at the day of judgment, without any spiritual light. And it is a lesser degree of the same, that awakens the consciences of natural men, without spiritual light in this world. The same discoveries are in some measure given in the conscience of an awakened sinner in this world, which will be given more fully in the consciences of sinners at the day of judgment. The same kind of sight or apprehension of God, in a lesser degree, makes awakened sinners in this world sensible of the dreadful guilt of sin against so great and terrible a God, and sensible of its amazing punishment, and fills them with fearful apprehensions of Divine wrath; that will thoroughly convince all wicked men, of the infinitely dreadful nature and guilt of sin, and asto-

nish them with apprehensions of wrath, when Christ shall come in the glory of his power and majesty, and every eye shall see him, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. And in those common illuminations, which are sometimes given to natural men, exciting in them some kind of religious desire, love and joy, the mind is only assisted to a clearer apprehension of the natural good that is in divine things. Thus, sometimes, under common illuminations, men are raised with the ideas of the natural good that is in heaven: as its outward glory, its ease, its honour and advancement, a being there the objects of the high favour of God, and the great respect of men and angels, &c. So there are many things exhibited in the gospel, concerning God and Christ, and the way of salvation, that have a natural good in them, which suits the natural principle of self-love. Thus in that great goodness of God to sinners, and the wonderful dying love of Christ, there is a natural good, which all men love, as they love themselves; as well as a spiritual and holy beauty, which is seen only by the regenerate. Therefore there are many things appertaining to the word of God's grace delivered in the gospel, which may cause natural men, when they hear it, anon with joy to receive it. All that love which natural men have to God and Christ, and Christian virtues and good men, is not from any sight of the amiableness of the holiness, or true moral excellency of these things; but only for the sake of the natural good there is in them. All natural men's hatred of sin, is as much from principles of nature, as men's hatred of a tiger for his rapaciousness, or their aversion to a serpent

for his poison and hurtfulness; and all their love of Christian virtue, is from no higher principle than their love of a man's good nature, which appears amiable to natural men; but no otherwise than silver and gold appears amiable in the eyes of a merchant, or than the blackness of the soil is beautiful in the eyes of the farmer.

From what has been said of the nature of spiritual understanding, it appears that spiritual understanding does not consist in any new doctrinal knowledge, or in having suggested to the mind any new proposition, not before read or heard of; for it is plain that this suggesting of new propositions, is a thing entirely diverse from giving the mind a new taste or relish of beauty and sweetness.* It is also evident, that spiritual knowledge does not consist in any new doctrinal explanation of any part of the Scripture; for still, this is but doctrinal knowledge, or the knowledge of propositions: the doctrinal explaining of any part of Scripture, is only giving us to understand, what are the propositions contained or taught in that part of Scripture.

Hence it appears, that the spiritual understanding of the Scripture, does not consist in opening to the mind the mystical meaning of the Scripture, in its

* Calvin, in his Institutions, Book I. Chap. ix. §. 1. says, "It is not the office of the Spirit that is promised us, to make new and before-unheard-of revelations, or to coin some new kind of doctrine, which tends to draw us away from the received doctrine of the gospel; but to seal and confirm to us that very doctrine which is by the gospel." And in the same place he speaks of some that in those days maintained the contrary notion, "pretending to be immediately led by the Spirit, as persons that were governed by a most haughty self-conceit; and not so properly to be looked upon as only labouring under a mistake, as driven by a sort of raving madness."

parables, types, and allegories; for this is only a doctrinal explication of the Scripture. He that explains what is meant by the stony ground, and the seeds springing up suddenly, and quickly withering away, only explains what propositions or doctrines are taught in it. So he that explains what is typified by Jacob's ladder, and the angels of God ascending and descending on it, or what was typified by Joshua's leading Israel through Jordan, only shows what propositions are hid in these passages. And many men can explain these types, who have no spiritual knowledge. It is possible that a man might know how to interpret all the types, parables, enigmas, and allegories in the Bible, and not have one beam of spiritual light in his mind; because he may not have the least degree of that spiritual sense of the holy beauty of divine things which has been spoken of, and may see nothing of this kind of glory in any thing contained in any of these mysteries, or any other part of the Scripture. It is plain, by what the apostle says, that a man might understand all such mysteries, and have no saving grace: "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." They therefore are very foolish, who are exalted in an opinion of their own spiritual attainments, from notions that come from their minds, of the mystical meaning of these and those passages of Scripture, as though it was a spiritual understanding of these passages, immediately given them by the Spirit of God, and hence have their affections highly raised; and what has been said, shows the vanity of such affections.

From what has been said, it is also evident, that it is not spiritual knowledge for persons to be informed of their duty, by having it immediately suggested to their minds, that such and such outward actions or deeds are the will of God. If we suppose that it is truly God's manner thus to signify his will to his people by immediate inward suggestions, such suggestions have nothing of the nature of spiritual light. Such kind of knowledge would only be one kind of doctrinal knowledge; a proposition concerning the will of God, is as properly a doctrine of religion, as a proposition concerning the nature of God, or a work of God: and a having either of these kinds of propositions, or any other proposition, declared to a man, either by speech or inward suggestion, differs vastly from a having the holy beauty of divine things manifested to the soul, wherein spiritual knowledge does most essentially consist. Thus there was no spiritual light in Balaam, though he had the will of God immediately suggested to him by the Spirit of God from time to time, concerning the way that he should go, and what he should do and say.

It is manifest, therefore, that a being led and directed in this manner, is not that holy and spiritual leading of the Spirit of God, which is peculiar to the saints, and a distinguishing mark of the sons of God: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law."

And if persons have the will of God concerning their actions, suggested to them by some text of Scripture, suddenly and extraordinarily brought to

their minds, which text, as the words lay in the Bible before they came to their minds, related to the action and behaviour of some other person, but they suppose, as God sent the words to them, he intended something further by them, and meant such a particular action of theirs; I say, if persons should have the will of God thus suggested to them with texts of Scripture, it alters not the case. The suggestion being accompanied with an apt text of Scripture, does not make the suggestion to be of the nature of spiritual instruction. As, for instance, if a person in New England, on some occasion, were at a loss whether it was his duty to go into some popish or heathenish land, where he was like to be exposed to many difficulties and dangers, and should pray to God that he would show him the way of his duty; and after earnest prayer, should have those words which God spake to Jacob, suddenly and extraordinarily brought to his mind, as if they were spoken to him: "Fear not to go down into Egypt; and I will go with thee; and I will also surely bring thee up again." In which words, though, as they lay in the Bible before they came to his mind, they related only to Jacob, and his behaviour; yet he supposes that God has a further meaning, as they were brought and applied to him; that thus they are to be understood in a new sense, that by Egypt is to be understood this particular country he has in his mind, and that the action intended is his going thither, and that the meaning of the promise is, that God would bring him back into New England again. There is nothing of the nature of a spiritual or gracious leading of the Spirit in this; for there is nothing of the nature of spiritual understanding in it.

Thus to understand texts of Scripture, is not to have a spiritual understanding of them. Spiritually to understand the Scripture, is rightly to understand what is in the Scripture, and what was in it before it was understood: it is to understand rightly, what used to be contained in the meaning of it, and not the making a new meaning. When the mind is enlightened, spiritually and rightly, to understand the Scripture, it is enabled to see that in the Scripture, which before was not seen by reason of blindness. But if it was by reason of blindness, that is an evidence that the same meaning was in it before, otherwise it would have been no blindness not to see it: it is no blindness not to see a meaning which is not there. Spiritually enlightening the eyes to understand the Scripture, is to open the eyes, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law:" which argues, that the reason why the same was not seen in the Scripture before, was, that the eyes were shut; which would not be the case, if the meaning that is now understood was not there before, but is now newly added to the Scripture, by the manner of the Scripture's coming to my mind. This making a new meaning to the Scripture, is the same thing as making a new Scripture; it is properly adding to the word, which is threatened with so dreadful a curse. Spiritually to understand the Scripture, is to have the eyes of the mind opened, to behold the wonderful spiritual excellency of the glorious things contained in the true meaning of it, and that always were contained in it, ever since it was written; to behold the amiable and bright manifestations of the divine perfections, and of the excellency and sufficiency of Christ, and

the excellency and suitableness of the way of salvation by Christ, and the spiritual glory of the precepts and promises of the Scripture, &c. which things are, and always were in the Bible, and would have been seen before, if it had not been for blindness, without having any new sense added, by the words being sent by God to a particular person, and spoken anew to him, with a new meaning.

And as to a gracious leading of the Spirit, it consists in two things: partly in instructing a person in his duty by the Spirit, and partly in powerfully inducing him to comply with that instruction. But so far as the gracious leading of the Spirit lies in instruction, it consists in a person's being guided by a spiritual and distinguishing taste of that which has in it true moral beauty. I have shown that spiritual knowledge primarily consists in a taste or relish of the amiableness and beauty of that which is truly good and holy: this holy relish is a thing that discerns and distinguishes between good and evil, between holy and unholy, without being at the trouble of a train of reasoning. As he who has a true relish of external beauty, knows what is beautiful by looking upon it; he stands in no need of a train of reasoning about the proportion of the features, in order to determine whether that which he sees be a beautiful countenance or not; he needs nothing, but only the glance of his eye. He who has a rectified musical ear, knows whether the sound he hears be true harmony; he does not need first to be at the trouble of the reasonings of a mathematician about it. There is a holy beauty and sweetness in words and actions, as well as a natural beauty in counte-

nances and sounds, and sweetness in food: "Doth not the ear try words, and the mouth taste his meat?" When a holy and amiable action is suggested to the thoughts of a holy soul, that soul, if in the lively exercise of its spiritual taste, at once sees a beauty in it, and so inclines to it, and closes with it. On the contrary, if an unworthy unholy action be suggested to it, its sanctified eye sees no beauty in it, and is not pleased with it; its sanctified taste relishes no sweetness in it, but, on the contrary, it is nauseous to it. Yea, its holy taste and appetite leads it to think of that which is truly lovely; naturally suggests it as a healthy taste and appetite, and naturally suggests the idea of its proper object. Thus a holy person is led by the Spirit, as he is instructed and led by his holy taste and disposition of heart; whereby, in the lively exercise of grace, he easily distinguishes good and evil, and knows at once what is a suitable amiable behaviour towards God and towards man, in this case and the other, and judges what is right, as it were spontaneously, and of himself, without a particular deduction, by any other arguments than the beauty that is seen, and the goodness that is tasted. Thus Christ blames the Pharisees, that they "did not even of their own selves judge what was right," without needing miracles to prove it. The apostle seems plainly to have respect to this way of judging of spiritual beauty: "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God."

There is such a thing as good taste of natural beauty, (which learned men often speak of,) that is

exercised about temporal things, in judging of them; as about the justness of a speech, the goodness of style, the beauty of a poem, the gracefulness of deportment, &c. A late great philosopher of our nation writes this upon it:* "To have a taste, is to give things their real value, to be touched with the good to be shocked with the ill; not to be dazzled with false lustres, but in spite of all colours, and every thing that might deceive or amuse, to judge soundly. Taste and judgment, then, should be the same thing; and yet it is easy to discern a difference. The judgment forms its opinion from reflection: the reason, on this occasion, fetches a kind of circuit, to arrive at its end; it supposes principles, it draws consequences, and it judges; but not without a thorough knowledge of the case: so that, after it has pronounced, it is ready to render a reason of its decrees. Good taste observes none of these formalities: ere it has time to consult, it has taken its side; as soon as ever the object is presented it, the impression is made, the sentiment formed, ask no more of it. As the ear is wounded with a harsh sound, as the smell is soothed with an agreeable odour, before ever the reason have meddled with those objects to judge of them, so the taste opens itself at once, and prevents all reflection. They may come afterwards to confirm it, and discover the secret reasons of its conduct; but it was not in its power to wait for them. Frequently it happens not to know them at all, and what pains soever it uses, cannot discover what it was determined it to think as it did.

* Chamber's Dictionary, under the word TASTE.

This conduct is very different from what the judgment observes in its decisions: unless we choose to say, that good taste is, as it were, a first motion, or a kind of instinct of right reason, which hurries on with rapidity, and conducts more securely, than all the reasonings she could make; it is a first glance of the eye, which discovers to us the nature and relations of things in a moment."

Now, as there is such a kind of taste of the mind as this, which philosophers speak of, whereby persons are guided in their judgment, of the natural beauty, gracefulness, propriety, nobleness, and sublimity of speeches and actions, whereby they judge, as it were, by the glance of the eye, or by inward sensation, and the first impression of the object; so there is likewise such a thing as a divine taste, given and maintained by the Spirit of God, in the hearts of the saints, whereby they are, in like manner, led and guided in discerning and distinguishing the true spiritual and holy beauty of actions; and that more easily, readily, and accurately, as they have more or less of the Spirit of God dwelling in them. And thus "the sons of God are led by the Spirit of God, in their behaviour in the world."

A holy disposition and spiritual taste, where grace is strong and lively, will enable a soul to determine what actions are right and becoming Christians, not only more speedily, but far more exactly, than the greatest abilities without it. This may be illustrated by the manner in which some habits of mind, and dispositions of heart, of a nature inferior to true grace, will teach and guide a man in his actions. As, for instance, if a man be a very good-natured man, his

good-nature will teach him better how to act benevolently amongst mankind, and will direct him, on every occasion, to those speeches and actions which are agreeable to rules of goodness, than the strongest reason will a man of a morose temper. So, if a man's heart be under the influence of an entire friendship, and most endeared affection to another; though he be a man of an indifferent capacity, yet this habit of his mind will direct him, far more readily and exactly, to a speech and deportment, or manner of behaviour, which shall in all respects be sweet and kind, and agreeable to a benevolent disposition of heart, than the greatest capacity without it. He has, as it were, a spirit within him, that guides him; the habit of his mind is attended with a taste, by which he immediately relishes that air and mien which is benevolent, and disrelishes the contrary, and causes him to distinguish between one and the other in a moment, more precisely than the most accurate reasonings can find out in many hours. As the nature and inward tendency of a stone, or other heavy body, that is let fall from a loft, shows the way to the centre of the earth, more exactly in an instant, than the ablest mathematician, without it, could determine, by his most accurate observations, in a whole day. Thus it is that a spiritual disposition and taste teaches and guides a man in his behaviour in the world. So an eminently humble, or meek, or charitable disposition, will direct a person of mean capacity to such a behaviour, as is agreeable to Christian rules of humility, meekness, and charity, far more readily and precisely than the most diligent study and elaborate reasonings, of a man of the strongest faculties, who

has not a Christian spirit within him. So also will a spirit of love to God, and holy fear and reverence towards God, and filial confidence in God, and an heavenly disposition, teach and guide a man in his behaviour.

It is an exceedingly difficult thing for a wicked man, destitute of Christian principles in his heart to guide him, to know how to demean himself like a Christian, with the life, and beauty, and heavenly sweetness of a truly holy, humble, Christ-like, behaviour. He knows not how to put on these garments; neither do they fit him: "A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a fools heart is at his left. Yea, also, when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool." "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city." "The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable." "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness." "The heart of the righteous teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips."

The saints, in thus judging of actions by a spiritual taste, have not a particular recourse to the express rules of God's word, with respect to every word and action that is before them, the good or evil of which they thus judge; but, yet, their taste itself, in general, is subject to the rule of God's word, and must be tried by that, and a right reasoning upon it. As a man of a rectified palate judges of particular morsels by his taste; but yet his palate itself must be judged of, whether it be right or not, by cer-

tain rules and reasons. But a spiritual taste of soul mightily helps the soul in its reasonings on the word of God, and in judging of the true meaning of its rules; as it removes the prejudices of a depraved appetite, and naturally leads the thoughts in the right channel, casts a light on the word of God, and causes the true meaning most naturally to come to mind, through the harmony there is between the disposition and relish of a sanctified soul, and the true meaning of the rules of God's word. Yea, this harmony tends to bring the texts themselves to mind, on proper occasions; as the particular state of the stomach and palate tends to bring such particular meats and drinks to mind as are agreeable to that state. Thus, the children of God are led by the Spirit of God, in judging of actions themselves, and in their meditations upon, and judging of, and applying the rules of God's holy word: and so God "teaches them his statutes, and causes them to understand the way of his precepts;" which the Psalmist so often prays for.

But this leading of the Spirit is a thing exceedingly diverse from that which some call so; which consists not in teaching them God's statutes and precepts, that he has already given; but in giving them new precepts, by immediate inward speech or suggestion; and has in it no tasting the true excellency of things, or judging or discerning the nature of things at all. They do not determine what is the will of God by any taste or relish, or any manner of judgment of the nature of things, but by an immediate dictate concerning the thing to be done; there is no such thing as any judgment or wisdom in the case. Whereas in that leading of the Spirit, which is pecu-

liar to God's children, is imparted that true wisdom and holy discretion, so often spoken of in the word of God; which is high above the other way, as the stars are higher than a glow-worm; and that which Balaam and Saul (who sometimes were led by the Spirit in that other way) never had, and no natural man can have, without a change of nature.

What has been said of the nature of spiritual understanding, as essentially consisting in a divine supernatural sense and relish of the heart, not only shows that there is nothing of it in this falsely supposed leading of the Spirit, which has now been spoken of; but also shows the difference between spiritual understanding, and all kinds and forms of enthusiasm, all imaginary sights of God, and Christ, and heaven, all supposed witnessing of the Spirit, and testimonies of the love of God by immediate inward suggestion; and all impressions of future events, and immediate revelations of any secret facts whatsoever; all enthusiastical impressions and applications of words of Scripture, as though they were words now immediately spoken by God to a particular person, in a new meaning, and carrying something more in them, than the words contain as they are in the Bible; and all interpretations of the mystical meaning of the Scripture, by supposed immediate revelation. None of these things consist in a divine sense and relish of the heart, of the holy beauty and excellency of divine things: nor have they any connection with such a sense; but all consist in impressions in the head; all impressions on the imagination are to be referred to the head, and consist in the exciting of external ideas in the mind, either in ideas of

outward shapes and colours, or words spoken, or letters written, or ideas of things external and sensible, belonging to actions done, or events accomplished, or to be accomplished. An enthusiastical supposed manifestation of the love of God, is made by the exciting of an idea of a smiling countenance, or some other pleasant outward appearance, or by the idea of pleasant words spoken, or written, excited in the imagination or some pleasant bodily sensation. So when persons have an imaginary revelation of some secret fact, it is by exciting external ideas; either of some words, implying a declaration of that fact, or some visible or sensible circumstances of such a fact. So the supposed leading of the Spirit, to do the will of God in outward behaviour, is either by exciting in their minds the idea of words, (which are outward things,) either of Scripture, or other words, which they look upon as an immediate command of God; or else by exciting and impressing strongly the ideas of the outward actions themselves. So when an interpretation of a Scripture type or allegory, is immediately, in an extraordinary manner, strongly suggested, it is by suggesting words, as though one secretly whispered and told the meaning, or by exciting other ideas in the imagination.

Experiences and discoveries of this kind commonly raise the affections of such as are deluded by them to a great height, and make a mighty uproar both in soul and body. And a very great part of the false religion that has been in the world, from one age to another, consists in such discoveries as these, and in the affections that flow from them. In such things consisted the experiences of the ancient Pythago-

reans, and many others among the heathen, who had strange ecstacies and raptures, and pretended to a divine afflatus, and immediate revelations from heaven. In such things seem to have consisted the experiences of the Essenes, an ancient sect among the Jews, at and after the times of the apostles. In such things consisted the experiences of many of the ancient Gnostics, and the Montanists, and other sects of ancient heretics, in the primitive ages of the Christian church. And in such things consisted the pretended immediate converse with God and Christ, and saints and angels, of the Monks, Anchorites, and Recluses, that formerly abounded in the church of Rome. In such things consisted the pretended high experiences, and great spirituality of many sects of enthusiasts, that swarmed in the world after the reformation; such as the Anabaptists, Antinominians, and Familists, the followers of N. Stork, Th. Muncer, Jo. Becold, Henry Pfesier, David George, Casper Swenckfield, Henry Nicolas, Johannes Agricola Eislebius; and the many wild enthusiasts that were in England in the days of Oliver Cromwell; and the followers of Mrs. Hutchison, in New-England; as appears by the particular accounts given of these sects by that eminently holy man, Mr. Samuel Rutherford, in his "Display of the Spiritual Antichrist." And in such things as these consisted the experiences of the late French Prophets, and their followers. And in these things seems to lie the religion of the many kinds of enthusiasts of the present day. It is chiefly by such sort of religion as this that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light: and it is that which he has ever most successfully made use of to confound hope-

ful and happy revivals of religion, from the beginning of the Christian church to this day. When the Spirit of God is poured out, to begin a glorious work, then the old serpent, as fast as possible, and by every means, introduces this bastard religion, and mingles it with the true; which has soon brought all things into confusion. The pernicious consequences of it is not easily imagined, until we see and are amazed with its awful effects, and the dismal desolation it has made. If the revival of true religion be very great in its beginning, yet if this bastard comes in, there is danger of its doing as Gideon's bastard, Abimelech, did, who never left until he had slain all his threescore and ten true-born sons, excepting one, that was forced to fly. Great and strict, therefore, should be the watchfulness and guard that ministers maintain against such things, especially at a time of great awakening; for men, especially the common people, are easily bewitched with such things; they having such a glaring and glistering show of high religion; the devil hiding his own shame, and appearing as an angel of light, that men may not be afraid of him, but may adore him.

The imagination or fantasy seems to be that wherein all those delusions of Satan are formed, with which those are carried away who are under the influence of false religion, and counterfeit graces and affections. Here is the devil's grand lurking place, the very nest of foul and delusive spirits. It is very much to be doubted, whether the devil can come at the soul of man to affect it at all, or to excite any thought or motion, or produce any effect whatsoever in it, any other way than by the fantasy; which is

that power of the soul by which it receives, and is the subject of the ideas of outward and sensible things. As to the laws and means which the Creator has established, for the intercourse and communication of unbodied spirits, we know nothing; we do not know by what medium they manifest their thoughts to each other, or excite thoughts in each other. But as to spirits that are united to bodies, those bodies are their medium of communication. They have no other medium of acting on other creatures, or being acted on by them, than the body: therefore, it is not to be supposed that Satan can excite any thought, or produce any effect in the soul of man, otherwise than by some motion of the animal spirits, or by causing some motion or alteration in something which appertains to the body. There is this reason to think that the devil cannot produce thoughts in the soul immediately, or any other way than by the medium of the body, namely, that he cannot immediately see or know the thoughts of the soul: to do that is abundantly declared in the Scripture, to be peculiar to the omniscient God. But it is not likely that the devil can immediately produce an effect, which is out of the reach of his immediate view. It seems unreasonable to suppose, that his immediate agency should be out of his own sight, or that it should be impossible for him to see what he himself immediately does. Is it not unreasonable to suppose, that any spirit or intelligent agent should, by the act of his will, produce effects according to his understanding, or agreeable to his own thoughts, and that immediately, and yet the effects produced be beyond the reach of his understanding, or where

he can have no immediate perception or discerning at all? But if this be so, that the devil cannot produce thoughts in the soul immediately, or any other way than by the animal spirits, or by the body, then it follows, that he never brings to pass any thing in the soul but by the imagination or fantasy, or by exciting external ideas. For we know that alterations in the body do immediately excite no other sort of ideas in the mind than external ideas, or ideas of the outward senses, or ideas which are of the same outward nature. As to reflection, abstraction, reasoning, &c. and those thoughts and inward motions which are the fruits of these acts of the mind, they are not the next effects of impressions on the body. So that it must be only by the imagination that Satan has access to the soul, to tempt and delude it, or suggest any thing to it.* And this seems to be the

* "The imagination is that room of the soul wherein the devil doth often appear. Indeed (to speak exactly) the devil hath no efficient power over the rational part of a man; he cannot change the will, he cannot alter the heart of a man. So that the utmost he can do, in tempting a man to sin, is by suasion and suggestion only. But then, how doth the devil do this? Even by working upon the imagination. He observeth the temper and bodily constitution of a man; and thereupon suggests to his fancy, and injects his fiery darts thereinto, by which the mind will come to be wrought upon. The devil then, though he hath no imperious efficacy over thy will, yet, because he can thus stir and move thy imagination, and thou being naturally destitute of grace, canst not withstand these suggestions; hence it is that any sin in thy imagination, though but in the outward works of the soul, yet doth quickly lay hold on all. And indeed, by this means do arise those horrible delusions that are in many erroneous ways of religion; all is because their imaginations are corrupted. Yea, how often are these diabolical delusions of the imagination taken for the gracious operation of God's Spirit!—It is from hence that many have pretended to enthusiasms;—they leave the Scrip-

reason why persons that are under the disease of melancholy are commonly so visibly and remarkably subject to the suggestions and temptations of Satan: that being a disease which peculiarly affects the animal spirits, and is attended with weakness of that part of the body which is the fountain of the animal spirits, even the brain, which is, as it were, the seat of the fantasy. It is by impressions made on the brain that any ideas are excited in the mind, by the motion of the animal spirits, or any changes made in the body. The brain being thus weakened and diseased, it is less under the command of the higher faculties of the soul, and yields the more easily to extrinsic impressions, and is overpowered by the disordered motions of the animal spirits; and so the devil has greater advantage to affect the mind, by working on the imagination. And thus Satan, when he casts in those horrid suggestions into the minds of many melancholy persons, in which they have no hand themselves, he does it by exciting imaginary ideas, either of some dreadful words or sentences, or other horrid outward ideas. And when he tempts other persons who are not melancholy, he does it by present-

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tures, and wholly attend to what they perceive and feel within them."—*Burges on Original Sin*, p. 369.

The great Turretine, speaking on that question, *What is the power of angels?* says, "As to bodies, there is no doubt but they can do a great deal upon all sorts of elementary and sublunary bodies, to move them locally, and variously to agitate them. It is also certain that they can act upon the external and internal senses, to excite them or to blind them. But as to the rational soul itself, they can do nothing immediately upon that; for to God alone, who knows and searches the hearts, and who has them in his hands, does it also appertain to bow and move them whithersoever he will. But angels can act upon the rational soul only immediately, by imaginations."—*Theolog. Elench.* Loc. VII. Quest. 7.

ing to the imagination, in a lively and alluring manner, the objects of their lusts, or by exciting ideas of words, and so by them exciting thoughts; or by promoting an imagination of outward actions, events, circumstances, &c. Innumerable are the ways by which the mind might be led on to all kind of evil thoughts, by exciting external ideas in the imagination.

If persons keep no guard at these avenues of Satan, by which he has access to the soul, to tempt and delude it, they will be likely to have enough of him. And especially if, instead of guarding against him, they lay themselves open to him, and seek and invite him, because he appears as an angel of light, and counterfeits the illuminations and graces of the Spirit of God, by inward whispers, and immediate suggestions of facts and events, pleasant voices, beautiful images, and other impressions on the imagination. There are many who are deluded by such things, and are lifted up with them, and seek after them, that have a continued course of them, and can have them almost when they will; and especially when their pride and vainglory has most occasion for them, to make a show of them before company. It is with them something as it is with those who are professors of the art of telling where lost things are to be found, by impressions made on their imaginations: they laying themselves open to the devil, he is always at hand to give them the desired impression.

Before I finish what I would say on this head of imaginations, counterfeiting spiritual light, and affections arising from them, I would renewedly (to prevent misunderstanding of what has been said) desire it may

be observed, that I am far from determining, that no affections are spiritual which are attended with imaginary ideas. Such is the nature of man, that he can scarcely think of any thing intensely without some kind of outward ideas. They arise and interpose themselves unavoidably, in the course of a man's thoughts; though oftentimes they are very confused, and are not what the mind regards. When the mind is much engaged, and the thoughts intense, oftentimes the imagination is more strong, and the outward idea more lively, especially in persons of some constitutions of body. But there is a great difference between these two things, namely, lively imaginations arising from strong affections, and strong affections arising from lively imaginations. The former may be, and doubtless often is, in case of truly gracious affections. The affections do not arise from the imagination, nor have any dependence upon it; but, on the contrary, the imagination is only the accidental effect, or consequent of the affection, through the infirmity of human nature. But when the latter is the case, as it often is that the affection arises from the imagination, and is built upon it, as its foundation, instead of a spiritual illumination or discovery, then is the affection, however elevated, worthless and vain. And this is the drift of what has been now said, of impressions on the imagination. Having observed this, I proceed to another mark of gracious affections.

CHAPTER V.

Truly gracious Affections are attended with a reasonable and spiritual conviction of the judgment, of the reality and certainty of divine things.

This seems to be implied in the text that was laid as the foundation of this discourse, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

All truly gracious persons have a solid, full, thorough, and effectual conviction of the truth of the great things of the gospel; I mean, that they no longer halt between two opinions; the great doctrines of the gospel cease to be any longer doubtful things, or matters of opinion, which, though probable, are yet disputable; but with them, they are points settled and determined as undoubted and indisputable; so that they are not afraid to venture their all upon their truth. Their conviction is an effectual conviction; so that the great, spiritual, mysterious, and invisable things of the gospel, have the influence of real and certain things upon them; they have the weight and power of real things in their hearts; and accordingly rule in their affections, and govern them through the course of their lives. With respect to Christ's being the Son of God, and Saviour of the world, and the great things he has revealed concerning himself, and his Father, and another world, they have not only a predominating opinion that these things are true, and

so yield their assent, as they do in many other matters of doubtful speculation; but they see that it is really so; their eyes are opened, so that they see that really Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. And as to the things which Christ has revealed, of God's eternal purposes and designs concerning fallen man, and the glorious and everlasting things prepared for the saints in another world, they see that they are so indeed; and therefore these things are of great weight with them, and have a mighty power upon their hearts, and influence over their practice, in some measure answerable to their infinite importance.

That all true Christians have such a conviction of the truth of the things of the gospel, is abundantly manifest from the holy Scripture. I will mention a few places of many:—"But whom say ye that I am? Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona:—my Father which is in heaven hath revealed it unto thee." "Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. —Now they have known that all things, whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee: for I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me." "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest." "We which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake.—Death worketh in us.—We having the spirit of faith, according as it is written,

I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you." "For which cause we faint not." "While we look not at the things which are seen," &c. "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God." "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight.) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord." "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." "Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;" together with that whole chapter, (Heb. xi.) "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us." "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

Therefore truly gracious affections are attended with such a kind of conviction and persuasion of the truth of the things of the gospel, and sight of their evidence and reality, as these and other scriptures speak of.

There are many religious affections, which are not attended with such a conviction of the judgment. There are many apprehensions and ideas which some have, that they call divine discoveries, which are affecting, but not convincing. Though for a little while they may seem to be more persuaded of the truth of the things of religion than they used to be, and may yield a forward assent, like many of Christ's hearers, who believed for a while; yet they have no thorough and effectual conviction; nor is there any great abiding change in them, in this respect, that whereas formerly they did not realize the great things of the gospel, now these things, with regard to reality and certainty, appear new to them, and they behold them quite in another view than they used to do. There are many persons who have been exceedingly raised with religious affections, and think they have been converted; they do not go about the world any more convinced of the truth of the gospel, than they used to be; or at least, there is no remarkable alteration: they are not men who live under the influence and power of a realizing conviction of the infinite and eternal things which the gospel reveals; if they were, it would be impossible for them to live as they do. Because their affections are not attended with a thorough conviction of the mind, they are not at all to be depended on: however great a show and noise they

make, it is like the blaze of tow, or crackling of thorns, or like the forward flourishing blade on stony ground, that has no root nor deepness of earth to maintain its life.

Some persons, under high affections, and a confident persuasion of their good estate, have that, which they very ignorantly call a seeing of the truth of the word of God, and which is very far from it, after this manner: they have some texts of Scripture coming to their minds, in a sudden and extraordinary manner, immediately declaring unto them (as they suppose) that their sins are forgiven, or that God loves them, and will save them; and it may be, have a chain of scriptures coming one after another, to the same purpose; and they are convinced that it is truth; that is, they are confident that it is certainly so, that their sins are forgiven, and God does love them, &c. They say they know it is so; and when the words of Scripture are suggested to them, and as they suppose immediately spoken to them by God, in this meaning they are ready to cry out, Truth, truth! it is certainly so! the word of God is true! And this they call a seeing the truth of the word of God. Whereas, the whole of their faith amounts to no more, than only a strong confidence of their own good estate, and so a confidence that these words are true which they suppose tell them they are in a good estate; when indeed (as was shown before) there is no scripture which declares that any person is in a good estate directly, or any other way than by consequence. So that this, instead of being a real sight of the truth of the word of God, is a sight of nothing but

a phantom, and is all over a delusion. Truly to see the truth of the word of God, is to see the truth of the gospel; which is the glorious doctrine the word of God contains, concerning God and Jesus Christ, and the way of salvation by him, and the world of glory that he is entered into, and purchased for all them who believe; and not a revelation that such and such particular persons are true Christians, and shall go to heaven. Therefore those affections which arise from no other persuasion of the truth of the word of God than this, arise from delusion, and not true conviction; and consequently are themselves delusive and vain.

But if the religious affections that persons have, do indeed arise from a strong persuasion of the truth of the Christian religion; their affections are not the better, unless their persuasion be a reasonable persuasion or conviction. By a reasonable conviction, I mean a conviction founded on real evidence, or upon that which is a good reason, or just ground of conviction. Men may have a strong persuasion that the Christian religion is true, when their persuasion is not at all built on evidence, but altogether on education, and the opinion of others; as many Mahometans are strongly persuaded of the truth of the Mahometan religion, because their fathers, and neighbours, and nation believe it. That belief of the truth of the Christian religion, which is built on the very same grounds with the Mahometan's belief of the Mahometan religion, is the same sort of belief. And though the thing believed happens to be better, yet that does not make the belief itself to be of a better sort; for though the thing believed happens

to be true, yet the belief of it is not owing to this truth, but to education. So that, as the conviction is no better than the Mahometan's conviction; so the affections that flow from it are no better, in themselves, than the religious affections of the Mahometans.

But if that belief of Christian doctrines, from which persons' affections arise, be not merely from education, but indeed from reasons and arguments which are offered, it will not from thence necessarily follow, that their affections are truly gracious: for in order to that, it is requisite not only that the belief from which their affections arise, should be a reasonable, but also a spiritual belief or conviction. I suppose none will doubt but that some natural men do yield a kind of assent of their judgments to the truth of the Christian religion, from the rational proofs or arguments that are offered to evince it. Judas, without doubt, thought Jesus to be the Messiah, from the things which he saw and heard; but yet all along was a devil. So in John ii. 23—25. we read of many that believed in Christ's name, when they saw the miracles that he did; whom yet Christ knew had not that within them which was to be depended on. So Simon the sorcerer believed, when he beheld the miracles and signs which were done, but yet remained in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. And if there is such a belief or assent of the judgment in some natural men, none can doubt but that religious affections may arise from that assent or belief; as we read of some who believed for a while, that were greatly affected, and anon with joy received the word.

It is evident that there is such a thing as a spiritual belief or conviction of the truth of the things of the gospel, or a belief that is peculiar to those who are spiritual, or who are regenerated, and have the Spirit of God, in his holy communications, and dwelling in them as a vital principle. So that the conviction they have, does not only differ from that which natural men have, in its concomitants, in that it is accompanied with good works; but the belief itself is diverse, the assent and conviction of the judgment is of a kind peculiar to those who are spiritual, and that of which natural men are wholly destitute. This is evident by the Scriptures, if any thing at all is so:—"They have believed that thou didst send me." "According to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness." "The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself."

What a spiritual conviction of the judgment is, we are naturally led to determine, from what has been said already, under the former head, of a spiritual understanding. The conviction of the judgment arises from the illumination of the understanding; the passing of a right judgment on things, depends on having a right apprehension or idea of things. And therefore it follows, that a spiritual conviction of the truth of the great things of the gospel, is such a conviction, or arises from having a

spiritual view or apprehension of those things in the mind. And this is also evident from the Scripture, which often represents, that a saving belief of the reality and divinity of the things proposed and exhibited to us in the gospel, is from the Spirit of God enlightening the mind, to have right apprehensions of the nature of those things, and, as it were, unveiling or revealing them, and enabling the mind to view them, and see them as they are:—"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." Where it is plain, that true faith arises from a spiritual sight of Christ: "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world.—Now they have known that all things, whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee: for I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me." Where Christ's manifesting God's name to the disciples, or giving them a true apprehension and view of divine things, was that whereby they knew that Christ's doctrine was of God, and that Christ himself was of him, and was sent by him: "Simon Peter said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And

Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." "Being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

If it be so, that that is a spiritual conviction of the divinity and reality of the things exhibited in the gospel, which arises from a spiritual understanding of those things, I have shown already what that is, namely, a sense and taste of the divine, supreme, and holy excellency and beauty of those things. So that then is the mind spiritually convinced of the divinity and truth of the great things of the gospel, when that conviction arises, either directly or remotely, from such a sense or view of their divine excellency and glory as is there exhibited. This clearly follows from what has been already said; and for this the Scripture is very plain and express: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the know-

ledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Together with the following passage in 2d Corinthians, which introduces this: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Nothing can be more evident, than that a saving belief of the gospel is here spoken of by the apostle, as arising from the mind's being enlightened to behold the divine glory of the things it exhibits.

This view or sense of the divine glory, and unparalleled beauty of the things exhibited to us in the gospel, has a tendency to convince the mind of their divinity, two ways—directly, and more indirectly.

1. A view of this divine glory directly, convinces the mind of the divinity of these things, as this glory is itself a direct, clear, and all-conquering evidence of it; especially when clearly discovered, or when this supernatural sense is given in a good degree.

He that has his judgment thus directly convinced, and assured of the divinity of the things of the gospel, by a clear view of their divine glory, has a reasonable conviction; his belief and assurance is altogether agreeable to reason; because the divine glory and beauty of divine things is, in itself, real evidence of their divinity, and the most direct and strong evidence. He that truly sees the divine, transcendent, supreme glory of those things which are divine, does, as it were, know their divinity intuitively: he not only argues that they are divine, but he sees that they are divine; he sees that in them wherein divinity chiefly consists; for in this glory, which is so vastly and inexpressibly distin-

guished from the glory of artificial things, and all other glory, does mainly consist the true notion of divinity. God is God, and distinguished from all other beings, and exalted above them, chiefly by his divine beauty, which is infinitely diverse from all other beauty. They therefore that see the stamp of this glory in divine things, see divinity in them, they see God in them, and so see them to be divine; because they see that in them wherein the truest idea of divinity consists. Thus a soul may have a kind of intuitive knowledge of the divinity of the things exhibited in the gospel; not that he judges the doctrines of the gospel to be from God, without any argument or deduction at all; but it is without any long chain of arguments; the argument is but one, and the evidence direct: the mind ascends to the truth of the gospel but by one step, and that is its divine glory.

It would be very strange, if any professing Christian should deny it to be possible, that there should be an excellency in divine things, which is so transcendent, and exceedingly different from what is in other things, that if it were seen would evidently distinguish them. We cannot rationally doubt, but that things that are divine, and appertain to the Supreme Being, are vastly different from things that are human: that there is a God-like, high, and glorious excellency in them, that does so distinguish them from the things which are of men, that the difference is ineffable: and therefore such, as, if seen, will have a most convincing, satisfying influence upon any one, that they are what they are, namely, divine. Doubtless there is that glory and excellency in the Divine Being, by which he is so infinitely distinguished from

all other beings, that, if it were seen, he might be known by it. It would therefore be very unreasonable to deny, that it is possible for God to give manifestations of this distinguishing excellency, in things by which he is pleased to make himself known; and that this distinguishing excellency may be clearly seen in them. There are natural excellencies, that are very evidently distinguishing of the subjects or authors, to any one who beholds them. How vastly is the speech of an understanding man different from that of a little child! And how greatly distinguished is the speech of some men of great genius, as Homer, Cicero, Milton, Locke, Addison, and others, from that of many other understanding men! There are no limits to be set to the degrees of manifestation of mental excellency, that there may be in speech. But the appearances of the natural perfections of God, in the manifestations he makes of himself, may doubtless be unspeakably more evidently distinguishing, than the appearances of those excellencies of worms of the dust, in which they differ one from another. He that is well acquainted with mankind, and their works, by viewing the sun, may know it is no human work. And it is reasonable to suppose, that when Christ comes at the end of the world, in the glory of his Father, it will be with such ineffable appearances of divinity, as will leave no doubt to the inhabitants of the world, even the most obstinate infidels, that he who appears is a divine person. But above all, do the manifestations of the moral and spiritual glory of the Divine Being, (which is the proper beauty of the divinity,) bring their own evidence, and tend to assure the heart. Thus the dis-

ciples were assured that Jesus was the Son of God, " for they beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." When Christ appeared in the glory of his transfiguration to his disciples, with that outward glory to their bodily eyes, which was a sweet and admirable symbol and semblance of his spiritual glory, together with his spiritual glory itself, manifested to their minds; the manifestation of glory was such, as did perfectly, and with good reason assure them of his divinity; as appears by what one of them, namely, the apostle Peter, says concerning it: " For we have not followed cunningly-devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." The apostle calls that mount the holy mount, because the manifestations of Christ which were there made to their minds, and which their minds were especially impressed and ravished with, was the glory of his holiness, or the beauty of his moral excellency; or, as another of these disciples, who saw it, expresses it, " his glory, as full of grace and truth."

Now this distinguishing glory of the Divine Being has its brightest appearance and manifestation, in the things proposed and exhibited to us in the gospel, the doctrines there taught, the word there spoken, and the divine counsels, acts and works there re-

vealed. These things have the clearest, most admirable, and distinguishing representations and exhibitions of the glory of God's moral perfections, that ever were made to the world. And if there be such a distinguishing, evidential manifestation of divine glory in the gospel, it is reasonable to suppose that there may be such a thing as seeing it: what should hinder but that it may be seen? It is no argument that it cannot be seen, that some do not see it; though they may be discerning men in temporal matters. If there be such ineffable, distinguishing evidential excellencies in the gospel, it is reasonable to suppose, that they are such as are not to be discerned, but by the special influence and enlightenings of the Spirit of God. There is need of uncommon force of mind to discern the distinguishing excellencies of the works of authors of great genius; those things in Milton, which to mean judges appear tasteless and imperfections, are his inimitable excellencies in the eyes of those who are of greater discerning and better taste. And if there be a book, of which God is the author, it is most reasonable to suppose, that the distinguishing glories of his word are of such a kind, as that the sin and corruption of men's hearts, which above all things alienates men from the Deity, and makes the heart dull and stupid to any sense or taste of those things wherein the moral glory of the divine perfections consist; I say it is but reasonable to suppose, that this would blind men from discerning the beauties of such a book; and that therefore they will not see them, but as God is pleased to enlighten them, and restore an holy taste, to discern and relish divine beauties.

This sense of the spiritual excellency and beauty of divine things, does also tend directly to convince the mind of the truth of the gospel, as there are very many of the most important things declared in the gospel, that are hid from the eyes of natural men, the truth of which does in effect consist in this excellency, or does so immediately depend upon it, and result from it, that in this excellency being seen, the truth of those things is seen. As soon as ever the eyes are opened to behold the holy beauty and amiableness that is in divine things, a multitude of most important doctrines of the gospel that depend upon it, (which all appear strange and dark to natural men,) are at once seen to be true. As for instance, hereby appears the truth of what the word of God declares concerning the exceeding evil of sin; for the same eye that discerns the transcendent beauty of holiness, necessarily therein sees the exceeding odiousness of sin: the same taste which relishes the sweetness of true moral good, tastes the bitterness of moral evil. And by this means a man sees his own sinfulness and loathsomeness; for he has now a sense to discern objects of this nature; and so sees the truth of what the word of God declares concerning the exceeding sinfulness of mankind, which before he did not see.—He now sees the dreadful pollution of his heart, and the desperate depravity of his nature, in a new manner; for his soul has now a sense given it to feel the pain of such a disease; and this shows him the truth of what the Scripture reveals concerning the corruption of man's nature, his original sin, and the ruinous undone condition man is in, and his need of a Saviour, his need of the mighty power

of God to renew his heart, and change his nature. Men by seeing the true excellency of holiness, do see the glory of all those things, which both reason and Scripture show to be in the Divine Being; for it has been shown, that the glory of them depends on this: and hereby they see the truth of all that the Scripture declares concerning God's glorious excellency and majesty, his being the fountain of all good, the only happiness of the creature, &c. And this again shows the mind the truth of what the Scripture teaches concerning the evil of sin against so glorious a God; and also the truth of what it teaches concerning sin's just desert of that dreadful punishment which it reveals: and also concerning the impossibility of our offering any satisfaction or sufficient atonement for that which is so infinitely evil and heinous. And this again shows the truth of what the Scripture reveals concerning the necessity of a Saviour, to offer an atonement of infinite value for sin. And this sense of spiritual beauty enables the soul to see the glory of those things which the gospel reveals concerning the person of Christ; and so enables it to see the exceeding beauty and dignity of his person, appearing in what the gospel exhibits of his word, works, acts, and life; and this apprehension of the superlative dignity of his person, shows the truth of what the gospel declares concerning the value of his blood and righteousness, and the infinite excellency of that offering he has made to God for us, and its sufficiency to atone for our sins, and recommend us to God. And thus the Spirit of God discovers the way of salvation by Christ; thus the soul sees the fitness and suitableness of this way of salvation, the

admirable wisdom of the contrivance, and the perfect suitableness of the provision that the gospel exhibits to our necessities. A sense of true divine beauty being given to the soul, the soul discerns the beauty of every part of the gospel scheme. This also shows the soul the truth of what the word of God declares concerning man's chief happiness, as consisting in holy exercises and enjoyments. This shows the truth of what the gospel declares concerning the unspeakable glory of the heavenly state. And what the prophecies of the Old Testament, and the writings of the apostles declare concerning the glory of the Messiah's kingdom, is now all plain: and also what the Scripture teaches concerning the reasons and grounds of our duty. The truth of all these things revealed in the Scripture, and many more that might be mentioned, appear to the soul, only by imparting that spiritual taste of divine beauty, which has been spoken of; they being hidden things to the soul before.

And besides all this, the truth of all those things which the Scriptures say about experimental religion, is hereby known; for they are now experienced. And this convinces the soul, that one who knew the heart of man, better than we know our own hearts, and perfectly knew the nature of virtue and holiness, was the author of the Scriptures. And the opening to view, with such clearness, such a world of wonderful and glorious truth in the gospel, that was before unknown, being quite above the view of a natural eye, but now appearing so clear and bright, has a powerful and invincible influence on the soul, to persuade of the divinity of the gospel.

Unless men may come to a reasonable solid persuasion and conviction of the truth of the gospel, by the internal evidences of it, by a sight of its glory, it is impossible that those who are illiterate, and unacquainted with history, should have any thorough and effectual conviction of it at all. They may without this, see a great deal of probability of it: it may be reasonable for them to give much credit to what learned men and historians tell them; and they may tell them so much, that it may look very probable and rational to them, that the Christian religion is true; and so much that they would be very unreasonable not to entertain this opinion. But to have a conviction, so clear, and evident, and assuring, as to be sufficient to induce them, with boldness to sell all; confidently and fearlessly to venture the loss of all things; to endure the most exquisite and long-continued torments; and to trample the world under foot, and count all things but dung for Christ; the evidence they can have from history cannot be sufficient. It is impossible that men, who have not something of a general view of the series of history from age to age, should come at the force of arguments for the truth of Christianity, drawn from history, to that degree, as effectually to induce them to venture their all upon it. After all that learned men have said to them, there will remain innumerable doubts on their minds; they will be ready, when pinched with some great trial of their faith, to say, "How do I know this, or that? How do I know when these histories were written? Learned men tell me these histories were so and so attested in their day; but how do I know that there were such attes-

tations then? They tell me there is equal reason to believe these facts, as any whatsoever that are related at such a distance; but how do I know that other facts which are related of those ages, ever were?" Those who have not something of a general view of the series of historical events, and of the state of mankind from age to age, cannot see the clear evidence from history, of the truth of facts, in distant ages; but there will endless doubts and scruples remain.

But the gospel was not given only for learned men. There are at least nineteen in twenty, if not ninty-nine in a hundred, of those for whom the Scriptures were written, that are not capable of any certain or effectual conviction of the divine authority of the Scriptures, by such arguments as learned men make use of. If men who have been brought up in heathenism, must wait for a clear and certain conviction of the truth of Christianity, until they have learning and acquaintance with the histories of politer nations, enough to see clearly the force of such kind of arguments; it will make the evidence of the gospel to them immensely cumbersome, and will render the propagation of the gospel among them infinitely difficult. Miserable is the condition of the Houssatannuck Indians, and others, who have lately manifested a desire to be instructed in Christianity, if they can come at no evidence of the truth of Christianity, sufficient to induce them to sell all for Christ, in any other way but this.

It is unreasonable to suppose, that God has provided for his people no more than probable evidences of the truth of the gospel. He has with great care

abundantly provided, and given them, the most convincing, assuring, satisfying, and manifold evidence of his faithfulness in the covenant of grace; and as David says, "made a covenant ordered in all things and sure." Therefore it is rational to suppose, that at the same time he would not fail of ordering the matter so, that there should not be wanting as great and clear evidence, that this is his covenant, and that these promises are his promises; or, which is the same thing, that the Christian religion is true, and that the gospel is his word. Otherwise in vain are those great assurances he has given of his faithfulness in his covenant, by confirming it with his oath, and so variously establishing it by seals and pledges. For the evidence that it is his covenant, is properly the foundation on which all the force and effect of those other assurances stand. We may therefore undoubtedly suppose and conclude, that there is some sort of evidence which God has given, that this covenant and these promises are his, beyond all mere probability; that there are some grounds of assurance of it held forth, which, if we are not blind to them, tend to give a higher persuasion than any arguing from history, human tradition, &c. which the illiterate and unacquainted with history are capable of; yea, that which is good ground of the highest and most perfect assurance, that mankind have in any case whatsoever, agreeable to those high expressions which the apostle uses, "Let us draw near in full assurance of faith." And "that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father,

and of Christ." It is reasonable to suppose, that God would give the greatest evidence of those things which are greatest, and the truth of which is of greatest importance to us: and therefore, if we are wise, and act rationally, we shall have the greatest desire of having full, undoubting, and perfect assurance. But it is certain, that such an assurance is not to be attained by the greater part of those who live under the gospel, by arguments fetched from ancient traditions, histories, and monuments.

And if we come to fact and experience, there is not the least reason to suppose, that one in a hundred of those who have been sincere Christians, and have had a heart to sell all for Christ, have come by their conviction of the truth of the gospel this way. If we read over the histories of the many thousands that died martyrs for Christ, since the beginning of the Reformation, and have cheerfully undergone extreme tortures in a confidence of the truth of the gospel, and consider their circumstances and advantages; how few of them we can reasonably suppose, ever came by their assured persuasion this way; or indeed for whom it was possible, reasonably to receive so full and strong an assurance, from such arguments! Many of them were weak women and children, and the greater part of them illiterate persons, many of whom had been brought up in popish ignorance and darkness, and were but newly come out of it, and lived and died in times wherein those arguments for the truth of Christianity, from antiquity and history, had been but very imperfectly handled. And, indeed, it is but very lately that these arguments have been set in a clear and convincing light, even by

learned men themselves: and since it has been done, there never were fewer thorough believers among those who have been educated in the true religion; infidelity never prevailed so much, in any age, as in this, wherein these arguments are handled to the greatest advantage.

The true martyrs of Jesus Christ, are not those who have only been strong in opinion that the gospel of Christ is true, but those that have seen the truth of it; as the very name of martyrs or witnesses (by which they are called in Scripture) implies. Those are very improperly called witnesses of the truth of any thing, who only declare they are very much of opinion that such a thing is true. Those only are proper witnesses, who can, and do testify that they have seen the truth of the thing they assert: "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." "And I saw, and bare record, that this is the Son of God." "And we have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldst know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldst hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard." But the true martyrs of Jesus Christ are called his witnesses; and all the saints, who by their holy practice under great trials, declare that faith, "which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," are called witnesses, because by their profession and practice, they declare their assurance of the truth and divinity of the gospel, having had the eyes of their minds enlightened to see divinity in the

gospel, or to behold that unparalleled, ineffably excellent, and truly divine glory shining in it, which is altogether distinguishing, evidential, and convincing: so that they may truly be said to have seen God in it, and to have seen that it is indeed divine; and so can speak in the style of witnesses; and not only say, that they think the gospel is divine, but say that it is divine, giving their testimony, because they have seen it to be so. Doubtless Peter, James, and John, after they had seen that excellent glory of Christ in the mount, would have been ready, when they came down, to speak in the language of witnesses, and to say positively that Jesus is the Son of God; as Peter says, they were eye-witnesses. And so all nations will be ready positively to say this, when they shall behold his glory at the day of judgment; though what will be universally seen, will be only his natural glory, and not his moral and spiritual glory, which is much more distinguishing. But yet it must be noted, that among those who have a spiritual sight of the divine glory of the gospel, there is a great variety of degrees of strength of faith, as there is a vast variety of the degrees of clearness of views of this glory: but there is no true and saving faith, or spiritual conviction of the judgment of the truth of the gospel, that has nothing in it of this manifestation of its internal evidence, in some degree. The gospel of the blessed God does not go abroad a-begging for its evidence, so much as some think; it has its highest and most proper evidence in itself. Great use may be made of external arguments, and they are not to be neglected but highly prized and valued; for they may be greatly serviceable to awaken

unbelievers, and bring them to serious consideration, and to confirm the faith of true saints: yea, they may be in some respects subservient to the begetting of a saving faith in men. Though what was said before remains true, that there is no spiritual conviction of the judgment, but what arises from an apprehension of the spiritual beauty and glory of divine things: for, as has been observed, this apprehension, or view, has a tendency to convince the mind of the truth of the gospel, two ways, either directly or indirectly. Having, therefore, already observed how it does this directly, I proceed now,

II. To observe how a view of this divine glory convinces the mind of the truth of Christianity more indirectly.

1. It doth so, as the prejudices of the heart against the truth of divine things are hereby removed, so that the mind thereby lies open to the force of the reasons which are offered. The mind of man is naturally full of enmity against the doctrines of the gospel; which is a disadvantage to those arguments that prove their truth, and causes them to lose their force upon the mind; but when a person has discovered to him the divine excellency of Christian doctrines, this destroys that enmity, and removes the prejudices, and sanctifies the reason, and causes it to be open and free. Hence there is a vast difference as to the force which arguments have to convince the mind. Hence was the very different effect which Christ's miracles had to convince the disciples, from what they had to convince the Scribes and Pharisees: not that they had a stronger reason, or had their reason more improved; but their reason was sancti-

fied, and those blinding prejudices, which the Scribes and Pharisees were under, were removed by the sense they had of the excellency of Christ and his doctrine.

2. It not only removes the hinderances of reason, but positively helps reason. It makes even the speculative notions more lively. It assists and engages the attention of the mind to that kind of objects which causes it to have a clearer view of them, and more clearly to see their mutual relations. The ideas themselves, which otherwise are dim and obscure, by this means have a light cast upon them, and are impressed with greater strength, so that the mind can better judge of them; as he that beholds objects on the face of the earth, when the light of the sun is cast upon them, is under greater advantage to discern them, in their true forms, and mutual relations, and to see the evidences of divine wisdom and skill in their contrivance, than he that sees them in a dim starlight, or twilight.

What has been said, may serve in some measure to show the nature of a spiritual conviction of the judgment of the truth and reality of divine things; and so to distinguish truly gracious affections from others; for gracious affections are evermore attended with such a conviction of the judgment.

But before I dismiss this head, it will be needful to observe the ways whereby some are deceived, with respect to this matter; and take notice of several things, that are sometimes taken for a spiritual and saving belief of the truth of the things of religion, which are indeed very different from it.

First, There is a degree of conviction of the truth of the great things of religion, that arises from the

common enlightenings of the Spirit of God. That more lively and sensible apprehension of the things of religion, with respect to what is natural in them, such as natural men have who are under awakenings and common illuminations, will give some degree of conviction of the truth of divine things, beyond what they had before they were thus enlightened. For hereby they see the manifestations there are, in the revelation made in the Holy Scriptures, and things exhibited in that revelation, of the natural perfections of God; such as his greatness, power, and awful majesty; which tends to convince the mind that this is the word of a great and terrible God. From the tokens there are of God's greatness and majesty in his word and works, of which they have a great sense, from the common influence of the Spirit of God, they may have a much greater conviction that these are indeed the word and works of a very great and invisible Being. And the lively apprehension of the greatness of God, which natural men may have, tends to make them sensible of the great guilt which sin against such a God brings, and the dreadfulness of his wrath for sin. And this tends to cause them more easily and fully to believe the revelation the Scripture makes of another world, and of the extreme misery it threatens there to be inflicted on sinners. And so from that sense of the great natural good there is in the things of religion, which is sometimes given in common illuminations, men may be more induced to believe the truth of religion. These things persons may have, and yet have no sense of the beauty and amiableness of the moral and holy excellency that is in the things of religion; and

therefore, no spiritual conviction of their truth. But yet such convictions are sometimes mistaken for saving convictions, and the affections flowing from them, for saving affections.

Second, The extraordinary impressions which are made on the imaginations of some persons, in the visions and immediate strong impulses and suggestions that they have, as though they saw sights, and had words spoken to them, may, and often do beget a strong persuasion of the truth of invisible things. Though the general tendency of such things in their final issue, is to draw men off from the word of God, and to cause them to reject the gospel, and to establish unbelief and atheism; yet for the present, they may, and often do beget a confident persuasion of the truth of some things that are revealed in the Scriptures; though their confidence is founded in delusion, and so worth nothing. As for instance, if a person has by some invisible agent, immediately and strongly impressed on his imagination, the appearance of a bright light, and glorious form of a person seated on a throne, with great external majesty and beauty, uttering some remarkable words, with great force and energy; the person who is the subject of such an operation, may be from hence confident, that there are invisible agents, spiritual beings, from what he has experienced, knowing that he had no hand himself in this extraordinary effect, which he has experienced; and he may also be confident, that this is Christ whom he saw and heard speaking: and this may make him confident that there is a Christ, and that Christ reigns on a throne in heaven, as he saw him; and may be confident that the words which he

heard him speak are true, &c. In the same manner as the lying miracles of the papists, may, for the present, beget in the minds of the ignorant deluded people a strong persuasion of the truth of many things declared in the New Testament. Thus, when the images of Christ, in popish churches, are on some extraordinary occasions made by priestcraft to appear to the people as if they wept, and shed fresh blood, and moved, and uttered such and such words; the people may be verily persuaded that it is a miracle wrought by Christ himself; and from thence may be confident there is a Christ, and that what they are told of his death and sufferings, and resurrection, and ascension, and present government of the world is true; for they may look upon this miracle as a certain evidence of all these things, and a kind of ocular demonstration of them. This may be the influence of these lying wonders for the present; though the general tendency of them is not to convince that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, but finally to promote atheism.

There are multitudes that are deluded with a counterfeit faith, from impressions on their imagination, in the manner which has now been spoken of. They say they know that there is a God, for they have seen him; they know that Christ is the Son of God, for they have seen him in his glory; they know that Christ died for sinners, for they have seen him hanging on the cross, and his blood running from his wounds; they know there is a heaven and a hell, for they have seen the misery of the damned souls in hell, and the glory of saints and angels in heaven, (meaning some external representations, strongly im-

pressed on their imagination); they know that the Scriptures are the word of God, and that such and such promises in particular are his word, for they have heard him speak them to them, they came to their minds suddenly and immediately from God, without their having any hand in it.

Third, Persons may seem to have their belief of the truth of the things of religion greatly increased, when the foundation of it is only a persuasion they have received of their interest in them. They first, by some means or other, take up a confidence, that if there be a Christ in heaven, these things are theirs; and this prejudices them more in favour of the truth of them. When they hear of the great and glorious things of religion, it is with this notion, that all these things belong to them; and hence easily become confident that they are true; they look upon it to be greatly for their interest that they should be true. It is very obvious what a strong influence men's interests and inclinations have on their judgments. While a natural man thinks, that if there be a heaven and hell; the latter, and not the former, belongs to him; then he will be hardly persuaded that there is a heaven or hell: but when he comes to be persuaded, that hell belongs only to other folks, and not to him, then he can easily allow the reality of hell, and cry out of others senselessness and sottishness in neglecting means of escape from it; and being confident that he is a child of God, and that God has promised heaven to him, he may seem strong in the faith of its reality, and may have a great zeal against that infidelity which denies it.

CHAPTER VI.

Gracious Affections are attended with Evangelical Humiliation.

Evangelical humiliation is a sense that a Christian has of his own utter insufficiency, despicableness, and odiousness, with an answerable frame of heart.

There is a distinction to be made between a legal and evangelical humiliation. The former is what men may be the subjects of, while they are yet in a state of nature, and have no gracious affection; the latter is peculiar to true saints: the former is from the common influence of the Spirit of God, assisting natural principles, and especially natural conscience; the latter is from the special influences of the Spirit of God, implanting and exercising supernatural and divine principles: the former is from the mind's having a greater sense of the things of religion, as to their natural properties and qualities, and particularly of the natural perfections of God, such as his greatness, terrible majesty, &c. which were manifested to the congregation of Israel, in giving the law at Mount Sinai; the latter is from a sense of the transcendent beauty of divine things in their moral qualities: in the former, a sense of the awful greatness, and natural perfections of God, and of the strictness of his law, convinces men that they are exceeding sinful, and guilty, and exposed to the wrath of God, as it will wicked men and devils at the day of judgment;

but they do not see their own odiousness on account of sin; they do not see the hateful nature of sin; a sense of this is given in evangelical humiliation, by a discovery of the beauty of God's holiness and moral perfection. In a legal humiliation, men are made sensible that they are little and nothing before the great and terrible God, and that they are undone, and wholly insufficient to help themselves; as wicked men will be at the day of judgment; but they have not an answerable frame of heart, consisting in a disposition to abase themselves, and exalt God alone: this disposition is given only in evangelical humiliation, by overcoming the heart, and changing its inclination, by a discovery of God's holy beauty. In a legal humiliation, the conscience is convinced; as the consciences of all will be most perfectly at the day of judgment; but because there is no spiritual understanding, the will is not bowed, nor the inclination altered; this is done only in evangelical humiliation. In legal humiliation, men are brought to despair of helping themselves; in evangelical, they are brought voluntarily to deny and renounce themselves: in the former, they are subdued and forced to the ground; in the latter, they are brought sweetly to yield, and freely and with delight to prostrate themselves at the feet of God.

Legal humiliation, has in it no spiritual good, nothing of the nature of true virtue; whereas evangelical humiliation is that wherein the excellent beauty of Christian grace does very much consist. Legal humiliation is useful, as a means in order to evangelical; as a common knowledge of the things of religion is a requisite means in order to spiritual

knowledge. Men may be legally humbled, and have no humility; as the wicked at the day of judgment will be thoroughly convinced that they have no righteousness, but are altogether sinful, and exceedingly guilty, and justly exposed to eternal damnation, and be fully sensible of their own helplessness, without the least mortification of the pride of their hearts: but the essence of evangelical humiliation consists in such humility as becomes a creature, in itself exceeding sinful, under a dispensation of grace; consisting in a mean esteem of himself, as in himself nothing, and altogether contemptible and odious: attended with the mortification of all disposition to exalt himself, and a free renunciation of his own glory.

This is a great and most essential thing in true religion. The whole frame of the gospel, and every thing appertaining to the new covenant, and all God's dispensations towards fallen man, are calculated to bring to pass this effect in the hearts of men. They that are destitute of this, have no true religion, whatever profession they may make, and how high soever their religious affections may be: "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith;" that is, he shall live by his faith on God's righteousness and grace, and not his own goodness and excellency. God has abundantly manifested in his word, that this is what he has a peculiar respect to in his saints, and that nothing is acceptable to him without it: "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

" Though the Lord be high, yet he hath respect unto the lowly." " He giveth grace unto the lowly." " Thus saith the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." " Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool,—but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." " He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" " Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of God." " Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." " Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." The centurion, that we have an account of, Luke vii. acknowledged that he was not worthy that Christ should enter under his roof, and that he was not worthy to come to him. See the manner of the woman's coming to Christ, that was a sinner: " And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster-box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head." She

did not think the hair of her head, which is the natural crown and glory of a woman, too good to wipe the feet of Christ withal. Jesus most graciously accepted her, and says to her, " Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace." The woman of Canaan submitted to Christ, in his saying, " It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs," and did as it were own that she was worthy to be called a dog; whereupon Christ says unto her, " O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee, even as thou wilt." The prodigal son said, " I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." " And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others, &c.—The publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." " And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him." " Put ye on as the elect of God, humbleness of mind." " I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, &c.—And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed." " A new heart also will I give you,—and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my

statutes, &c.—Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations." "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord." "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

As we would therefore make the Holy Scriptures our rule in judging of the nature of true religion, and judging of our own religious qualifications and state, it concerns us greatly to look at this humiliation, as one of the most essential things pertaining to true Christianity.* This is the principal part of the great Christian duty of self-denial. That duty consists in two things, *first*, in a man's denying his worldly inclinations, and in forsaking and renouncing all worldly objects and enjoyments; and, *secondly*, in denying his natural self-exaltation, and renouncing his own dignity and glory, and in being emptied of himself; so that he does freely and from his very heart, as it were, renounce himself, and annihilate himself. Thus the Christian doth in evangelical humiliation. And this latter is the greatest and most

* Calvin, in his Institutions, Book II. chap. 2. sect. 11. says, "I was always exceedingly pleased with that saying of Chrysostom, 'The foundation of our philosophy is humility;' and yet more pleased with that of Augustine. 'As,' says he, 'the rhetorician being asked, what was the first thing in the rules of eloquence, he answered pronunciation; what was the second, pronunciation; what was the third, still he answered, pronunciation.' So if you shall ask me concerning the precepts of the Christian religion, I would answer, firstly, secondly, and thirdly, and for ever, humility."

difficult part of self-denial: although they always go together, and one never truly is, where the other is not; yet natural men can come much nearer to the former than the latter. Many Anchorites and Recluses have abandoned (though without any true mortification) the wealth, and pleasures, and common enjoyments of the world, who were far from renouncing their own dignity and righteousness; they never denied themselves for Christ, but only sold one lust to feed another, sold a beastly lust to pamper a devilish one; and so were never the better, but their latter end was worse than their beginning: they turned out one evil spirit to let in seven others, that were worse than the first, though of a fairer countenance. It is inexpressible, and almost inconceivable, how strong a self-righteous, self-exalting, disposition is naturally in man; and what he will not do and suffer to feed and gratify it; and what lengths have been gone in a seeming self-denial in other respects, by Essenes and Pharisees among the Jews, and by Papists, many sects of heretics, and enthusiasts among professing Christians; and by many Mahometans; and by Pythagorean philosophers, and others among the Heathen; and all to do sacrifice to this Moloch of spiritual pride, or self-righteousness, and that they may have something wherein to exalt themselves before God, and above their fellow-creatures.

That humiliation which has been spoken of is what all the most glorious hypocrites, who make the most splendid show of mortification to the world, and high religious affection, do grossly fail in. Were it not that this is so much insisted on in Scripture,

as a most essential thing in true grace, one would be tempted to think that many of the heathen philosophers were truly gracious, in whom was so bright an appearance of many virtues, and also great illuminations, and inward fervours and elevations of mind, as though they were truly the subjects of divine illapses and heavenly communications.* It is true, that many hypocrites make great pretences to humility, as well as other graces; and very often there is nothing whatever of which they make a higher profession. They endeavour to make a great show of humility in speech and behaviour; but they com-

* "Albeit the Pythagoreans were thus famous for Judaic mysterious wisdom, and many moral, as well as natural accomplishments, yet were they not exempted from boasting and pride; which was indeed a vice most epidemic, and as it were congenial, among all the philosophers; but in a more particular manner, among the Pythagoreans. So Hornius Hist. Philosoph. L. 3. cap. 11. The manners of the Pythagoreans were not free from boasting. They were all such as abounded in the sense and commendation of their own excellencies, and boasting even almost to the degree of immodesty and impudence, as great Heinsius ad Horat. has rightly observed.—Thus indeed does proud nature delight to walk in the sparks of its own fire. And although many of these old philosophers could, by the strength of their own lights and heats, together with some common elevations and raisures of spirit, (peradventure from a more than ordinary, though not special and saving assistance of the Spirit,) abandon many grosser vices; yet they were all deeply immersed in that miserable cursed abyss of spiritual pride; so that all their natural, and moral, and philosophic attainments, did feed, nourish, strengthen, and render most inveterate, this hell-bred pest of their hearts.—Yea, those of them that seemed most modest, as the Academics, who professed they knew nothing, and the Cynics, who greatly decried, both in words and habits, the pride of others, yet even they abounded in the most notorious and visible pride. So connatural and morally essential to corrupt nature, is this envenomed root, fountain, and plague of spiritual pride; especially where there is any natural, moral, or philosophic excellence to feed the same. Whence, Austin rightly judged all these philosophic virtues to be but splendid sins."—*Gale's Court of the Gentiles*, Part II. Book ii. chap. 10. sect. 17.

monly make bungling work of it, though glorious work in their own eyes. They cannot find out what a humble speech and behaviour is, or how to speak and act so that there may indeed be a savour of Christian humility in what they say and do: that sweet humble air and mien is beyond their art, not being led by the Spirit, or naturally guided to a behaviour becoming holy humility, by the vigour of a lowly spirit within them. And therefore they have no other way, many of them, but only to be much in declaring that they be humble, and telling how they were humbled to the dust at such and such times, and abounding in very bad expressions which they use about themselves; such as, " I am the least of all saints; I am a poor vile creature; I am not worthy of the least mercy, or that God should look upon me! Oh, I have a dreadful wicked heart! my heart is worse than the devil: Oh, this cursed heart of mine!" &c. Such expressions are very often used, not with a heart that is broken, not with spiritual mourning, not with the tears of her that washed Jesus' feet with her tears, not as " remembering and being confounded, and never opening their mouth more because of their shame, when God is pacified," but with a light air, with smiles in the countenance, or with a Pharisaical affectation: and we must believe that they are thus humble, and see themselves so vile, upon the credit of their saying so; for there is nothing appears in them of any savour of humility, in the manner of their deportment and deeds that they do. There are many that are full of expressions of their own vileness, who yet expect to be looked upon as eminent and bright saints by others,

as their due; and it is dangerous for any, so much as to hint the contrary, or to carry it towards them any otherwise, than as if we looked upon them as some of the chief of Christians. There are many that are much in crying out of their wicked hearts, and their great short-comings, and unprofitableness, and speaking as though they looked on themselves as the meanest of the saints; who yet, if a minister should seriously tell them the same things in private, and should signify, that he feared they were very low and weak Christians, and though they had reason solemnly to consider of their great barrenness and unprofitableness, and falling so much short of many others, it would be more than they could digest; they would think themselves highly injured; and there would be a danger of a rooted prejudice in them against such a minister.

There are some that are abundant in talking against legal doctrines, legal preaching, and a legal spirit, who do but little understand the thing they talk against. A legal spirit is a more subtile thing than they imagine, it is too subtile for them. It lurks, and operates, and prevails in their hearts, and they are most notoriously guilty of it, at the same time when they are inveighing against it.—So far as a man is not emptied of himself, and of his own righteousness and goodness, in whatever form or shape, so far he is of a legal spirit. A spirit of pride of a man's own righteousness, morality, holiness, affection, experience, faith, humiliation, or any goodness whatsoever, is a legal spirit. It was no pride in Adam before the fall to be of a legal spirit; because of his circumstances, he might seek accep-

tance by his own righteousness. But a legal spirit, in a fallen sinful creature, can be nothing else but spiritual pride; and reciprocally, a spiritually proud spirit is a legal spirit. There is no man living that is lifted up with a conceit of his own experiences and discoveries, and upon the account of them glisters in his own eyes, but what trusts in his experiences, and makes a righteousness of them; however he may use humble terms, and speak of his experiences as of the great things God has done for him, and it may be calls upon others to glorify God for them; yet he that is proud of his experiences, arrogates something to himself, as though his experiences were some dignity of his. And if he looks on them as his own dignity, he necessarily thinks that God looks on them so too; for he necessarily thinks his own opinion of them to be true; and consequently judges that God looks on them as he does; and so unavoidably imagines that God looks on his experiences as a dignity in him, as he looks on them himself; and that he glisters as much in God's eyes, as he does in his own. And thus he trusts in what is inherent in him, to make him shine in God's sight, and recommend him to God; and with this encouragement he goes before God in prayer: and this makes him expect much from God; and this makes him think that Christ loves him, and that he is willing to clothe him with his righteousness; because he supposes that he is taken with his experiences and graces. And this is a high degree of living on his own righteousness; and such persons are in the high road to hell. Poor deluded wretches, who think they look so glistering in God's eyes, when they are a smoke in his nose,

and are many of them more odious to him, than the most impure beast in Sodom, that makes no pretence to religion! To do as these do, is to live upon experiences, according to the true notion of it; and not to do as those, who only make use of spiritual experiences, as evidences of a state of grace, and in that way receive hope and comfort from them.

There is a sort of men, who indeed abundantly cry down works, and cry up faith in opposition to works, and set up themselves very much as evangelical persons, in opposition to those that are of a legal spirit, and make a fair show of advancing Christ and the gospel, and the way of free grace, who are indeed some of the greatest enemies to the gospel way of free grace, and the most dangerous opposers of pure humble Christianity.*

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* "Take not every opinion and doctrine from men or angels, that bears a fair show of advancing Christ; for they may be but the fruits of evangelical hypocrisy and deceit; that being deceived themselves, may deceive others too: Matt. vii. 15. 'Beware of them that come in sheep's clothing;' in the innocency, purity, and meekness of Christ and his people; but inwardly are wolves, proud, cruel, censorious, speaking evil of what they know not. 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' Do not think, beloved, that Satan will not seek to send delusions among us. And do you think these delusions will come out of the popish pack, whose inventions smell above ground here? No, he must come, and will come with more evangelical, fine-spun devices. It is a rule observed amongst Jesuits, at this day, if they would conquer religion by subtlety, never oppose religion with a cross religion: but set it against itself. So oppose the gospel by the gospel. And look, as churches pleading for works, had new invented devised works; so when faith is preached, men will have their new inventions of faith. I speak not this against the doctrine of faith, where it is preached; but am glad of it: not that I would have men content themselves with every form of faith; for I believe that most men's faith needs confirming or trying. But I speak to prevent danger on that hand."—*Shepard's Parable*, Part I. p. 122.

There is a pretended great humiliation, and being dead to the law, and emptied of self, which is one of the biggest and most elated things in the world. Some there are, who have made great profession of experience of a thorough work of the law on their own hearts, and of being brought fully off from works; whose conversation has savoured most of a self-righteous spirit of any that ever I had opportunity to observe. And some who think themselves quite emptied of themselves, and are confident that they are abased in the dust, are full as they can hold with the glory of their own humility, and lifted up to heaven with a high opinion of their abasement. Their humility is a swelling, self-conceited, confident, showy, noisy, assuming humility. It seems to be the nature of spiritual pride, to make men conceited and ostentatious of their humility. This appears in that first-born of pride, among the children of men, that would be called His Holiness, even the Man of Sin, that exalts himself above all that is called God, or is worshipped: he styles himself Servant of servants; and, to make a show of humility, washes the feet of a number of poor men at his inauguration.

For persons to be truly emptied of themselves, and to be poor in spirit, and broken in heart, is quite another thing, and has other effects, than many imagine. It is astonishing how greatly many are deceived about themselves as to this matter, imagining themselves most humble, when they are most proud, and their behaviour is really the most haughty. The deceitfulness of the heart of man appears in no one thing, so much as this of spiritual pride, and self-righteousness. The subtlety of Satan appears in its

height, in his managing of persons with respect to this sin. And perhaps one reason may be, that here he has most experience; he knows the way of its coming in; he is acquainted with the secret springs of it; it was his own sin. Experience gives vast advantage in leading souls, either in good or evil.

But though spiritual pride be so subtle and secret an iniquity, and commonly appears under a pretext of great humility; yet there are two things by which it may (perhaps universally and surely) be discovered and distinguished.

First, He that is under the prevalence of this distemper, is apt to think highly of his attainments in religion, as comparing himself with others. It is natural for him to fall into that thought of himself, that he is an eminent saint, that he is very high among the saints, and has distinguishingly good and great experiences. That is the secret language of his heart: "God I thank thee that I am not as other men;" and, "I am holier than thou." Hence such are apt to put themselves forward among God's people, and as it were to take a high seat among them, as if there was no doubt but it belonged to them. They, as it were, naturally do that which Christ condemns,—take the highest room. This they do, by being forward to take upon them the place and the business of the chief; to guide, teach, direct, and manage; they are confident that they are guides to the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, instructors of the foolish, teachers of babes. It is natural for them to take it for granted, that it belongs to them to do the part of dictators and masters in matters of religion; and so they implicitly affect to be

called of men Rabbi, which is by interpretation Master, as the Pharisees did; that is, they are yet apt to expect that others should regard them, and yield to them, as masters in matters of religion.*

But he whose heart is under the power of Christian humility, is of a contrary disposition. If the Scriptures are at all to be relied on, such a one is apt to think his attainments in religion to be comparatively mean, and to esteem himself low among the saints, and one of the least of saints. Humility, or true lowliness of mind, disposes persons to think others better than themselves: "In lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves." Hence they are apt to think the lowest room belongs to them; and their inward disposition naturally leads them to obey that precept of our Saviour: "But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee." It is not natural to them to take upon them to do the part of teachers; but, on the contrary, they are disposed to think that they are not the persons, that others are fitter for it than they; as it was with Moses and Jeremiah, (Exod. iii. 11. Jer. i. 6.) though they were such eminent saints, and of great knowledge. It is not natural to them to think that it belongs to them to teach, but to be

* "There be two things wherein it appears that a man has only common gifts, and no inward principle: 1. These gifts ever puff up, and make a man something in his own eyes, as the Corinthian knowledge did, and many a private man thinks himself fit to be a minister."—*Shepard's Parable*, Part I. pp. 181, 182.

taught; they are much more eager to hear, and to receive instructions from others, than to dictate to others: "Be ye swift to hear, slow to speak." And when they do speak, it is not natural to them to speak with a bold, masterly air; but humility disposes them rather to speak trembling: "When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died." They are not apt to assume authority, and to take upon them to be chief managers and masters, but rather to be subject to others: "Be not many masters." "All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility." "Submitting yourselves one to another, in the fear of God."

There are some whose experiences naturally work that way, to make them think highly of their experiences; and they often themselves speak of their experiences as very great and extraordinary; they freely speak of the great things they have met with. This may be spoken and meant in a good sense. In one sense, every degree of saving mercy is a great thing: it is indeed a great thing, yea, infinitely great, for God to bestow the least crumb of children's bread on such dogs as we are in ourselves; and the more humble a person is that hopes that God has bestowed such mercy on him, the more apt will he be to call it a great thing that he has met with in this sense. But if by great things which they have experienced, they mean comparatively great spiritual experiences, or great compared with others' experiences, or beyond what is ordinary, which is evidently oftentimes the case, then for a person to say, I have met with great things, is the very same thing as to say, I am an

eminent saint, and have more grace than ordinary: for to have great experiences, if the experiences be true, and worth the telling of, is the same thing as to have great grace: there is no true experience, but the exercise of grace; and exactly according to the degree of true experience, is the degree of grace and holiness. Those who talk thus about their experiences, when they give an account of them, expect that others should admire them. Indeed they do not call it boasting, to talk after this manner about their experiences, nor do they look upon it as any sign of pride; because they say, "they know that it was not they that did it, it was free grace, they are the great things that God has done for them; they would acknowledge the great mercy God has shown them, and not make light of it." But so it was with the Pharisee of whom Christ tells us. He in words gave God the glory of making him to differ from other men: "God, I thank thee," says he, "that I am not as other men."* Their verbally ascribing it to the grace of God, that they are holier than other saints, does not hinder their forwardness to think so highly of their holiness, being a sure evidence of the pride and vanity of their minds. If they were under the influence of an humble spirit, their attainments in religion would not be so apt to shine in their own eyes, nor would they be so much in admiring their own beauty.—The Christians that are really the most

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* Calvin, in his Institutions, B. III. chap. xii. § 7. speaking of this Pharisee, observes, "that, in his outward confession, he acknowledges that the righteousness that he has is the gift of God: but, (says he,) because he trusts that he is righteous, he goes away out of the presence of God, unacceptable and odious."

eminent saints, and therefore have the most excellent experiences, and are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, humble themselves as a little child, "because they look on themselves as but little children in grace, and their attainments to be but the attainments of babes in Christ, and are astonished at, and ashamed of the low degrees of their love, and their thankfulness, and their little knowledge of God." Moses, when he had been conversing with God in the mount, and his face shone so bright in the eyes of others as to dazzle their eyes, wist not his face shone. There are some that go by the name of high professors, and some will own themselves to be high professors; but eminently humble saints, that will shine brightest in heaven, are not at all apt to profess high. I do not believe their is an eminent saint in the world, that is a high professor. Such will be much more likely to profess themselves to be the least of all saints, and to think that every saint's attainments and experiences are higher than his.*

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* Luther, as his words are cited by Rutherford, in his Display of the Spiritual Antichrist, pp. 143, 144, says thus: "So is the life of a Christian, that he that has begun, seems to himself to have nothing; but strives and presses forward, that he may apprehend: whence Paul says, 'I count not myself to have apprehended.' For indeed nothing is more pernicious to a believer, than that presumption, that he has already apprehended, and has no further need of seeking. Hence also, many fall back, and pine away in spiritual security and slothfulness." So Bernard says, "To stand still in God's way, is to go back." Wherefore this remains to him, that he has begun to be a Christian, to think that he is not yet a Christian, but to seek that he may be a Christian, that he may glory with Paul, "I am not, but I desire to be:" a Christian not yet finished, but only in his beginnings.—Therefore he is not a Christian, that is a Christian; that is, he that thinks himself a finished Christian, and is not sensible how he falls short. We reach after heaven, but are not

Such is the nature of grace, and of true spiritual light, that they naturally dispose the saints in the present state, to look upon their grace and goodness little, and their deformity great. And they that have the most grace and spiritual light of any in this world, have most of this disposition; as will appear most clear and evident to any one that soberly and thoroughly weighs the nature and reasons of things, and considers the things following.

That grace and holiness are worthy to be called little, that is, little in comparison of what it ought to be. And so it seems to one that is truly gracious; for such a one has his eye upon the rule of this duty; a conformity to that is what he aims at; it is what his soul struggles and reaches after, and it is by that that he estimates and judges of what he does, and what he has. To a gracious soul, and especially to one eminently gracious, that holiness appears little, which is little of what it should be; little of what he sees infinite reason for, and obligation to. If his holiness appears to him to be at a vast distance from this, it naturally appears despicable in his eyes, and not worthy to be mentioned as any beauty or amiableness in him. For the like reason as a hungry man naturally accounts that which is set before him but a little food, a small matter not worth mentioning, that is nothing in comparison of his appetite. Or as the child of a great prince, that is jealous for the honour of his father, and beholds the respect which

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in heaven. Woe to him that is wholly renewed! that is, that thinks himself to be so. That man, without doubt, has never so much as begun to be renewed, nor did he ever taste what it is to be a Christian.

men show him, naturally looks on that honour and respect very little, and not worthy to be regarded, which is nothing in comparison of that which the dignity of his father requires.

But such is the nature of true grace and spiritual light, that it opens to the view the infinite reason there is that he should be holy in a high degree. And the more grace he has, the more this is opened to view, the greater sense he has of the infinite excellency and glory of the Divine Being, and of the infinite dignity of the person of Christ, and the boundless length and breadth, and depth, and height, of the love of Christ to sinners. And as grace increases, the field opens more and more a distant view, until the soul is swallowed up with the vastness of the object, and the person is astonished to think how much it becomes him to love this God, and this glorious Redeemer, that has so loved man, and how little he does love. And so the more he apprehends, the more the smallness of his grace and love appears strange and wonderful: and therefore is more ready to think that others are beyond him. For wondering at the littleness of his own grace, he can scarcely believe that so strange a thing happens to other saints: it is amazing to him, that one that is really a child of God, and that has actually received the saving benefits of that unspeakable love of Christ, should love no more: and he is apt to look upon it as a thing peculiar to himself, a strange and exempt instance; for he sees only the outside of other Christians, but he sees his own inside.

Here the reader may possibly object, that love to God is really increased in proportion as the know-

ledge of God is increased; and therefore how should an increase of knowledge in a saint make his love appear less, in comparison of what is known? To which I answer, that although grace and the love of God in the saints, be answerable to the degree of knowledge or sight of God; yet it is not in proportion to the objects seen and known. The soul of a saint, by having something of God opened to sight, is convinced of much more than is seen. There is something that is seen, that is wonderful; and that sight brings with it a strong conviction of something vastly beyond, that is not immediately seen. So that the soul at the same time is astonished at its ignorance, and that it knows so little, as well as that it loves so little. And as the soul, in a spiritual view, is convinced of infinitely more in the object, yet beyond sight; so it is convinced of the capacity of the soul, of knowing vastly more, if the clouds and darkness were but removed. Which causes the soul, in the enjoyment of a spiritual view, to complain greatly of spiritual ignorance, and want of love, and long and reach after more knowledge, and more love.

Grace and the love of God, in the most eminent saints in this world, is truly very little in comparison of what it ought to be. Because the highest love, to which ever any attain in this life, is poor, cold, exceeding low, and not worthy to be named in comparison of what our obligations appear to be, from the joint consideration of these two things: 1. The reason God has given us to love him, in the manifestations he has made of his infinite glory, in his word, and in his works; and particularly in the gospel of his Son, and what he has done for sinful man

by him. And, 2. The capacity there is in the soul of man, by those intellectual faculties which God has given it, of seeing and understanding these reasons, which God has given us to love him. How small indeed is the love of the most eminent saint on earth, in comparison of what these things jointly considered require! And of this grace tends to convince men, and especially eminent grace; for grace is of the nature of light, and brings truth to view. And, therefore, he that has much grace, apprehends much more than others, that great height to which his love ought to ascend: and he sees better than others, how little a way he has risen towards that height. And, therefore, estimating his love by the whole height of his duty, it appears astonishingly little and low in his eyes.

And the eminent saint, having such a conviction of the high degree in which he ought to love God, shows him, not only the littleness of his grace, but the greatness of his remaining corruption. In order to judge how much corruption or sin we have remaining in us, we must take our measure from that height to which the rule of our duty extends: the whole of the distance we are at from that height, is sin; for failing of duty is sin; otherwise our duty is not our duty, and by how much the more we fall short of our duty, so much the more sin have we. Sin is no other than disagreeableness, in a moral agent, to the law or rule of his duty. And therefore the degree of sin is to be judged of by the rule: so much disagreeableness to the rule, so much sin, whether it be in defect or excess.—Therefore, if men, in their love to God, do not come up half

way to that height which duty requires, then they have more corruption in their hearts than grace; because there is more goodness wanting than is there; and all that is wanting is sin: it is an abominable defect; and appears so to the saints, especially those that are eminent; it appears exceeding abominable to them, that Christ should be loved so little, and thanked so little for his dying love: it is in their eyes hateful ingratitude.

And then the increase of grace has a tendency another way, to cause the saints to think their deformity vastly more than their goodness; it not only tends to convince them their corruption is much greater than their goodness, which is indeed the case; but it also tends to cause the deformity that there is in the least sin, or the least degree of corruption, to appear so great as vastly to outweigh all the beauty there is in the greatest holiness: for this also is indeed the case. For the least sin against an infinite God has an infinite hatefulness or deformity in it; but the highest degree of holiness in a creature has not an infinite loveliness in it: and therefore the loveliness of it is as nothing, in comparison of the deformity of the least sin. That every sin has infinite deformity and hatefulness in it, is most demonstrably evident; because what the evil, or iniquity or hatefulness of sin consists in, is the violating of an obligation, or the being or doing contrary to what we should be or do, or are obliged to. And therefore by how much the greater the obligation is that is violated, so much the greater is the iniquity and hatefulness of the violation. But certainly our obligation to love and honour any being,

is in some proportion to his loveliness and honourableness, or to his worthiness to be loved and honoured by us; which is the same thing. We are surely under greater obligation to love a more lovely being, than a less lovely; and if a Being be infinitely lovely or worthy to be loved by us, then our obligations to love him are infinitely great: and therefore, whatever is contrary to this love, has in it infinite iniquity, deformity, and unworthiness. But on the other hand, with respect to our holiness or love to God, there is not an infinite worthiness in that. The sin of the creature against God is ill-deserving and hateful in proportion to the distance there is between God and the creature: the greatness of the object, and the meanness and inferiority of the subject, aggravates it. But it is the reverse with regard to the worthiness of the respect of the creature to God; it is worthless, and not worthy, in proportion to the meanness of the subject. So much the greater the distance between God and the creature, so much the less is the creature's respect worthy of God's notice or regard. The great degree of superiority increases the obligation on the inferior to regard the superior; and so makes the want of regard more hateful: but the great degree of inferiority diminishes the worth of the regard of the inferior; because the more he is inferior, the less he is worthy of notice; the less he is, the less is what he can offer worth: for he can offer no more than himself, in offering his best respect; and therefore, as he is little, and little worth, so is his respect little worth. And the more a person has of true grace and spiritual light, the more will it appear thus to him; the more

will he appear to himself infinitely deformed by reason of sin, and the less will the goodness that is in his grace, or good experience, appear in proportion to it. For indeed it is nothing to it; it is less than a drop to the ocean; for finite bears no proportion at all to that which is infinite. But the more a person has of spiritual light, the more do things appear to him, in this respect, as they are indeed. Hence it most demonstrably appears, that true grace is of that nature, that the more a person has of it, with remaining corruption, the less does his goodness and holiness appear in proportion to his deformity; and not only to his past deformity, but to his present deformity, in the sin that now appears in his heart, and in the abominable defects of his highest and best affections, and brightest experiences.

The nature of many high and religious affections, and great discoveries (as they are called) in many persons that I have been acquainted with, is to hide and cover over the corruption of their hearts, and to make it seem to them as if all their sin was gone, and to leave them without complaints of any hateful evil left in them; (though it may be they cry out much of their past unworthiness;) a sure and certain evidence that their discoveries, as they call them, are darkness and not light. It is darkness that hides men's pollution and deformity; but light let into the heart discovers it, searches it out in its secret corners, and makes it plainly to appear; especially that penetrating, all-searching light of God's holiness and glory. It is true, that saving discoveries may, for the present, hide corruption in one sense; they restrain the positive exercises of it, such as malice,

envy, covetousness, lasciviousness, murmuring, &c. but they bring corruption to light, in that which is privitive, namely, that there is no more love, no more humility, no more thankfulness. Which defects appear most hateful in the eyes of those who have the most eminent exercises of grace; and are very burdensome, and cause the saints to cry out of their leanness, and odious pride and ingratitude. And whatever positive exercises of corruption at any time arise, and mingle themselves with eminent actings of grace, grace will exceedingly magnify the view of them, and render their appearance far more heinous and horrible.

The more eminent saints are, and the more they have of the light of heaven in their souls, the more do they appear to themselves, as the most eminent saints in this world do to the saints and angels in heaven. How can we rationally suppose the most eminent saints on earth appear to them, if beheld any otherwise than covered over with the righteousness of Christ, and their deformities swallowed up and hid in the coruscation of the beams of his abundant glory and love? how can we suppose our most ardent love and praises appear to them, that do behold the beauty and glory of God without a vail? how does our highest thankfulness for the dying love of Christ appear to them who see Christ as he is, who know as they are known, and see the glory of the person of him that died, and the wonders of his dying love, without any cloud of darkness? and how do they look on the deepest reverence and humility with which worms of the dust on earth approach that infinite Majesty which they behold? Do they appear great to them, or so much

as worthy of the name of reverence and humility, in those that they see to be at such an infinite distance from that great and holy God, in whose glorious presence they are? The reason why the highest attainments of the saints on earth appear so mean to them, is because they dwell in the light of God's glory, and see God as he is. And it is in this respect with the saints on earth as it is with the saints in heaven, in proportion as they are more eminent in grace.

I would not be understood, that the saints on earth have, in all respects, the worst opinion of themselves when they have most of the exercise of grace. In many respects it is otherwise. With respect to the positive exercises of corruption, they may appear to themselves freest and best when grace is most in exercise, and worst when the actings of grace are lowest. And when they compare themselves with themselves at different times, they may know, when grace is in lively exercise, that it is better with them than it was before; (though before, in the time of it, they did not see so much badness as they see now;) and when afterwards they sink again in the frame of their minds, they may know that they sink, and have a new argument of their great remaining corruption, and a rational conviction of a greater vileness than they saw before; and may have more of a sense of guilt, and a kind of legal sense of their sinfulness, by far, than when in the lively exercise of grace. But yet it is true, and demonstrable from the forementioned considerations, that the children of God never have so much of a sensible and spiritual conviction of their deformity, and so great, and quick, and abasing a sense

of their present vileness and odiousness, as when they are highest in the exercise of true and pure grace; and never are they so much disposed to set themselves low among Christians as then. And thus he that is greatest in the kingdom, or most eminent in the church of Christ, is the same that humbles himself, as the least infant among them: agreeable to that great saying of Christ, "Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

A true saint may know that he has some true grace; and the more grace there is, the more easily is it known: as was observed and proved before. But yet it does not follow that an eminent saint is easily sensible that he is an eminent saint, when compared with others. I will not deny that it is possible that he that has much grace, and is an eminent saint, may know it. But he will not be apt to know it; it will not be a thing obvious to him; that he is better than others, and has higher experiences and attainments, is not a foremost thought; nor is it that which, from time to time, readily offers itself; it is a thing that is not in his way, but lies far out of sight; he must take pains to convince himself of it; there will be need of a great command of reason, and a high degree of strictness and care in arguing, to convince himself. And if he be rationally convinced, by a very strict consideration of his own experiences, compared with the great appearances of low degrees of grace in some other saints, it will hardly seem real to him that he has more grace than they; and he will be apt to lose the conviction that he has by pains obtained; nor will it seem at all natural to him to act upon that suppo-

sition. And this may be laid down as an infallible thing, "That the person who is apt to think that he, as compared with others, is a very eminent saint, much distinguished in Christian experience, in whom this is a first thought, that rises of itself, and naturally offers itself, he is certainly mistaken; he is no eminent saint, but under the great prevailings of a proud and self-righteous spirit." And if this be habitual with the man, and is statedly the prevailing temper of his mind, he is no saint at all; he has not the least degree of any true Christian experience; so surely as the word of God is true.

And that sort of experiences that appears to be of that tendency, and is found from time to time to have that effect, to elevate the subject of them with a great conceit of those experiences, is certainly vain and delusive. Those supposed discoveries that naturally blow up the person with an admiration of the eminency of his discoveries, and fill him with conceit, that now he has seen, and knows more than most other Christians, have nothing of the nature of true spiritual light in them. All true spiritual knowledge is of that nature, that the more a person has of it, the more is he sensible of his own ignorance: "He that thinketh he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." Augur, when he had a great discovery of God, and sense of the wonderful height of his glory, and of his marvellous works, and cries out of his greatness and incomprehensibleness, at the same time had the deepest sense of his brutish ignorance, and looked upon himself the most ignorant of all the saints: "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man.

I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy. Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?"

For a man to be highly conceited of his spiritual and divine knowledge, is for him to be wise in his own eyes, if any thing is. And therefore it comes under those prohibitions—"Be not wise in thine own eyes"—"Be not wise in your own conceits:" and brings men under that woe—"Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight."

Those that are thus wise in their own eyes, are some of the least likely to get good, of any in the world. Experience shows the truth of that: "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him."

To this some may object, that the Psalmist, when we must suppose that he was in a holy frame, speaks of his knowledge as eminently great, and far greater than that of other saints: "I have more understanding than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts."

To this I answer two things:—

(1.) There is no restraint to be laid upon the Spirit of God, as to what he shall reveal to a prophet, for the benefit of his church, who is speaking or writing under immediate inspiration. The Spirit of God may reveal to such a one, and dictate to him to declare to others, secret things, that otherwise would be hard, yea, impossible for him to find out. As he

may reveal to him mysteries, that otherwise would be above the reach of his reason; or things in a distant place, that he cannot see; or future events, that it would be impossible for him to know and declare, if they were not extraordinarily revealed to him; so the Spirit of God might reveal to David this distinguishing benefit he had received, by conversing much with God's testimonies; and use him as his instrument to record it for the benefit of others, to excite them to the like duty, and to use the same means to gain knowledge. Nothing can be gathered concerning the natural tendency of the ordinary gracious influences of the Spirit of God, from that, that David declares of his distinguishing knowledge, under the extraordinary influences of God's Spirit, immediately dictating to him the divine mind by inspiration, and using David as his instrument to write what he pleased for the benefit of his church: any more than we can reasonably argue, that it is the natural tendency of grace to incline men to curse others, and wish the most dreadful misery to them that can be thought of, because David, under inspiration, often curses others, and prays that such misery may come upon them.

(2.) It is not certain that the knowledge David here speaks of, is spiritual knowledge, wherein holiness does fundamentally consist. But it may be that greater revelation which God made to him of the Messiah, and the things of his future kingdom, and the far more clear and extensive knowledge that he had of the mysteries and doctrines of the gospel than others, as a reward for his keeping God's testimonies. In this it is apparent, by the book of Psalms, that David far exceeded all that had gone before him.

Second, Another thing that is an infallible sign of spiritual pride, is, persons being apt to think highly of their humility. False experiences are commonly attended with a counterfeit humility. And it is the very nature of a counterfeit humility to be highly conceited of itself. False religious affections have generally that tendency, especially when raised to a great height, to make persons think that their humility is great, and accordingly to take much notice of their great attainments in this respect, and admire them. But eminently gracious affections (I scruple not to say it) are evermore of a contrary tendency, and have, universally, a contrary effect in those that have them. They, indeed, make them very sensible what reason there is that they should be deeply humbled, and cause them earnestly to thirst and long after it; but they make their present humility, or that to which they have already attained to appear small; and their remaining pride great, and exceedingly abominable.

The reason why a proud person should be apt to think his humility great, and why a very humble person should think his humility small, may be easily seen, if it be considered, that it is natural for persons, in judging of the degree of their own humiliation, to take their measure from that which they esteem their proper height, or the dignity wherein they properly stand. That may be great humiliation in one, that is no humiliation at all in another; because the degree of honourableness, or considerableness, wherein each properly stands, is very different. For some great man to stoop to loose the latchet of the shoes of another great man, his equal, or to wash his feet, would

be taken notice of as an act of abasement in him; and he being sensible of his own dignity, would look upon it so himself. But if a poor slave is seen stooping to unloose the shoes of a great prince, nobody will take any notice of this, as any act of humiliation in him, or token of any great degree of humility; nor would the slave himself, unless he be horribly proud, and ridiculously conceited of himself: and if, after he had done it, he should, in his talk and behaviour, show that he thought his abasement great in it, and had his mind much upon it, as an evidence of his being very humble, would not every body cry out upon him—"Who do you think yourself to be, that you should think this that you have done such a deep humiliation?" This would make it plain, to a demonstration, that this slave was swollen with a high degree of pride and vanity of mind, as much as if he declared in plain terms, "I think myself to be some great one." And the matter is no less plain and certain, when worthless, vile, and loathsome worms of the dust, are apt to put such a construction on their acts of abasement before God, and to think it a token of great humility in them, that they, under their affections, can find themselves so willing to acknowledge themselves to be so and so mean and unworthy, and to behave themselves as those that are so inferior. The very reason why such outward acts, and such inward exercises, look like great abasement in such a one, is because he has a high conceit of himself: whereas, if he thought of himself more justly, these things would appear nothing to him, and his humility in them worthy of no regard; but would rather be astonished at his pride, that one so infinitely des-

picable and vile is brought no lower before God. When he says in his heart, " This is a great act of humiliation; it is certainly a sign of great humility in me, that I should feel thus and do so"—his meaning is, " This is great humility for me, for such a one as I, that am so considerable and worthy." He considers how low he is now brought, and compares this with the height of dignity on which he, in his heart, thinks he properly stands, and the distance appears very great, and he calls it all mere humility, and as such admires it: whereas, in him that is truly humble, and really sees his own vileness and loathsomeness before God, the distance appears the other way. When he is brought lowest of all, it does not appear to him that he is brought below his proper station, but that he is not come to it; he appears to himself yet vastly above it, he longs to get lower, that he may come to it, but appears at a great distance from it. And this distance he calls pride. And therefore his pride appears great to him, and not his humility. For, although he is brought much lower than he used to be, yet it does not appear to him worthy of the name of humiliation, for him, that is so infinitely mean and detestable, to come down to a place, which, though it be lower than what he used to assume, is yet vastly higher than what is proper for him. As men would hardly count it worthy of the name of humility, in a contemptible slave, that formerly affected to be a prince, to have his spirit so far brought down as to take the place of a nobleman, when this is still so far above his proper station.

All men in the world, in judging of the degree of their own and others' humility, as appearing in any

act of theirs, consider two things; namely, the real degree of dignity they stand in, and the degree of abasement, and the relation it bears to that real dignity. Thus the complying with the same low place, or low act, may be an evidence of great humility in one, that evidences but little or no humility in another. But truly humble Christians have so mean an opinion of their own real dignity, that all their self-abasement, when considered with relation to that, and compared to that, appears very small to them. It does not seem to them to be any great humility, or any abasement to be made much of, for such poor, vile, abject creatures as they, to lie at the foot of God.

The degree of humility is to be judged of by the degree of abasement, and the degree of the cause for abasement: but he that is truly and eminently humble never thinks his humility great, considering the cause. The cause why he should be abased appears so great, and the abasement of the frame of his heart so greatly short of it, that he takes much more notice of his pride than his humility.

Every one that has been conversant with souls under convictions of sin, knows that those who are greatly convinced of sin are not apt to think themselves greatly convinced. And the reason is this: men judge of the degree of their own convictions of sin by two things jointly considered; namely, the degree of sense which they have of guilt and pollution, and the degree of cause they have for such a sense, in the degree of their real sinfulness. It is really no argument of any great conviction of sin, for some men to think themselves to be very sinful, beyond most others in the world, because they are so

indeed, very plainly and notoriously. And therefore a far less conviction of sin may incline such a one to think so than another; he must be very blind indeed not to be sensible of it. But he that is truly under great convictions of sin naturally thinks this to be his case. It appears to him, that the cause he has to be sensible of guilt and pollution is greater than others have, and therefore he ascribes his sensibleness of this to the greatness of his sin, and not to the greatness of his sensibility. It is natural for one under great convictions to think himself one of the greatest of sinners in reality, and also that it is so very plainly and evidently; for the greater his convictions are, the more plain and evident it seems to be to him. And, therefore, it necessarily seems to him so plain, and so easy to him to see it, that it may be seen without much conviction. That man is under great convictions, whose conviction is great in proportion to his sin. But no man that is truly under great convictions thinks his conviction great in proportion to his sin. For if he does, it is a certain sign that he inwardly thinks his sins small. And if that be the case, that is a certain evidence that his conviction is small. And this, by the way, is the main reason that persons, when under a work of humiliation, are not sensible of it in the time of it.

And as it is with conviction of sin, just so it is, by parity of reason, with respect to persons' conviction or sensibleness of their own meanness and vileness, their own blindness, their own impotence, and all that low sense that a Christian has of himself, in the exercise of evangelical humiliation. So that in a high degree of this, the saints are never disposed

to think their sensibleness of their own meanness, filthiness, impotence, &c. to be great; because it never appears great to them, considering the cause.

An eminent saint is not apt to think himself eminent in any thing; all his graces and experiences are ready to appear to him to be comparatively small; but especially his humility. There is nothing that appertains to Christian experience and true piety, that is so much out of his sight as his humility. He is a thousand times more quick-sighted to discern his pride than his humility: that he easily discerns, and is apt to take much notice of, but hardly discerns his humility. On the contrary, the deluded hypocrite, that is under the power of spiritual pride, is so blind to nothing as his pride; and so quick-sighted to nothing as the shows of humility that are in him.

The humble Christian is more apt to find fault with his own pride than with other men's. He is apt to put the best construction on others' words and behaviour, and to think that none are so proud as himself. But the proud hypocrite is quick to discern the mote in his brother's eye in this respect; while he sees nothing of the beam in his own. He is often crying out of other's pride, finding fault with others' apparel and way of living; and is affected ten times as much with his neighbour's ring or riband, as with all the filthiness of his own heart.

From the disposition there is in hypocrites to think highly of their humility, it comes to pass that counterfeit humility is forward to put itself forth to view. Those that have it, are apt to be much in speaking of their humiliations, and to set them forth

in high terms, and to make a great outward show of humility, in affected looks, gestures, or manner of speech, or meanness of apparel, or some affected singularity. So it was of old with the false prophets; so it was with the hypocritical Jews; and so Christ tells us it was with the Pharisees.* But it is contrariwise with true humility; they that have it are not apt to display their eloquence in setting of it forth, or to speak of the degree of their abasement in strong terms.† It does not affect to show itself in any singular outward meanness of apparel, or way of living: "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face." "Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship and humility, and neglecting of the body." Nor is true humility a noisy thing; it is not loud and boisterous. The Scripture represents it as of a contrary nature. Ahab, when he had a visible humility, a resemblance of true humility, went softly. A penitent, in the exercise of true humiliation, is represented as still and silent: "He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him." And silence is mentioned as what attends humility: "If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth."

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* Zech. xiii. 4. Isa. lvii. 5. Matth. vi. 16.

† It is an observation of Mr. Jones, in his excellent *Treatise of the Canon of the New Testament*, that the evangelist Mark, who was the companion of St. Peter, and is supposed to have written his gospel under the direction of that apostle, when he mentions Peter's repentance after his denying his Master, does not use such strong terms to set it forth as the other evangelists, he only uses these words, "When he thought thereon, he wept," Mark xiv. 72.; whereas the other evangelists say thus, "He went out and wept bitterly," Matth. xxvi. 75. Luke. xxii. 62.

Thus I have particularly and largely shown the nature of that true humility that attends holy affections, as it appears in its tendency to cause persons to think meanly of their attainments in religion, as compared with the attainments of others, and particularly of their attainments in humility; and have shown the contrary tendency of spiritual pride, to dispose persons to think their attainments in these respects to be great. I have insisted the longer on this matter, because I look upon it as a matter of great importance, as it affords a certain distinction between true and counterfeit humility; and also, as this disposition of hypocrites to look on themselves better than others, is what God has declared to be very hateful to him, "a smoke in his nose, and a fire that burneth all the day." It is mentioned as an instance of the pride of the inhabitants of that holy city (as it was called) Jerusalem, that they esteemed themselves far better than the people of Sodom, and so looked upon them worthy to be overlooked and disregarded by them: "For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thy mouth in the day of thy pride."

Let not the reader lightly pass over these things in application to himself. If you once have taken it in, that it is a bad sign for a person to be apt to think himself a better saint than others, there will arise a blinding prejudice in your own favour: and there will probably be need of a great strictness of self-examination, in order to determine whether it be so with you. If, on the proposal of the question, you answer, "No, it seems to me, none are so bad as I," do not let the matter pass off so; but examine

again, whether or not you do not think yourself better than others on this very account, because you imagine you think so meanly of yourself. Have you not a high opinion of this humility? and if you answer again, "No; I have not a high opinion of my humility; it seems to me I am as proud as the devil;" yet examine again, whether self-conceit do not rise up under this cover: whether, on this very account, that you think yourself as proud as the devil, you do not think yourself to be very humble.

From this opposition that there is between the nature of a true, and of a counterfeit humility, as to the esteem that the subjects of them have of themselves, arises a manifold contrariety of temper and behaviour.

A truly humble person, having such a mean opinion of his righteousness and holiness, is poor in spirit. For a person to be poor in spirit, is to be in his own sense and apprehension poor as to what is in him, and to be of an answerable disposition. Therefore, a truly humble person, especially one eminently humble, naturally behaves himself in many respects as a poor man: "The poor useth entreaties, but the rich answereth roughly." A poor man is not disposed to quick and high resentment when he is among the rich: he is apt to yield to others, for he knows others are above him; he is not stiff and self-willed; he is patient with hard fare; he expects no other than to be despised, and takes it patiently; he does not take it heinously that he is overlooked and but little regarded; he is prepared to be in low place; he readily honours his superiors; he takes reproofs quietly; he readily honours others as above

him; he easily yields to be taught, and does not claim much to his understanding and judgmemt; he is not over nice or humorsome, and has his spirit subdued to hard things; he is not assuming, nor apt to take much upon him; but it is natural for him to be subject to others. Thus it is with the humble Christian. Humility is (as the great Mastricht expresses it) a kind of holy pusillanimity.

A man that is very poor is a beggar; so is he that is poor in spirit. There is a great difference between those affections that are gracious, and those that are false: under the former, the person continues still a poor beggar at God's gates, exceeding empty and needy; but the latter make men appear to themselves rich, and increased with goods, and not very necessitous; they have a great stock in their own imagination for their subsistence.*

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* "This spirit ever keeps a man poor and vile in his own eyes, and empty.—When the man hath got some knowledge, and can discourse pretty well, and hath some taste of the heavenly gift, some sweet illapses of grace, and so his conscience is pretty well quieted: and if he hath got some answer to his prayers, and hath sweet affections, he grows full: and having ease to his conscience, casts off sense, and daily groaning under sin. And hence the spirit of prayer dies: he loses his esteem of God's ordinances; feels not such need of them; or gets no good, feels no life or power by them. This is the woeful condition of some; but yet they know it not. But now he that is filled with the Spirit, the Lord empties him; and the more the longer he lives. So that though others think he needs not much grace, yet he accounts himself the poorest."—*Shepard's Parable of the Ten Virgins*, Part II. p. 132.

"After all fillings, be ever empty, hungry, and feeling need, and praying for more."—*Ibid.* p. 151.

"Truly brethren, when I see the curse of God upon many Christians, that are now grown full of their parts, gifts, peace, comforts, abilities, duties, I stand adoring the riches of the Lord's mercy, to a little handful of poor believers; not only in making them empty, but in keeping them so all their days."—*Shepard's Sound Believer*, the late edition in Boston, pp. 158, 159.

A poor man is modest in his speech and behaviour; so, and much more, and more certainly and universally, is one that is poor in spirit; he is humble and modest in his behaviour amongst men. It is in vain for any to pretend that they are humble, and as little children before God, when they are haughty, assuming, and impudent in their behaviour amongst men. The apostle informs us, that the design of the gospel is to cut off all glorying, not only before God, but also before men, Rom. iv. 1, 2. Some pretend to great humiliation that are very haughty, audacious, and assuming in their external appearance and behaviour: but they ought to consider those scriptures, —"Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me." "These six things doth the Lord hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto him: a proud look," &c. "A high look and a proud heart are sin." "Thou wilt bring down high looks." "Him that hath a high look and a proud heart I will not suffer." "Charity vaunteth not itself, doth not behave itself unseemly."—There is a certain amiable modesty and fear that belongs to a Christian behaviour among men, arising from humility, that the Scripture often speaks of: "Be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you, with meekness and fear." "Fear, to whom fear." "Whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him." "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling." "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear." "While they behold your chaste con-

versation coupled with fear." "That women adorn themselves with modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety." In this respect, a Christian is like a little child; a little child is modest before men, and his heart is apt to be possessed with fear and awe amongst them.

The same spirit will dispose a Christian to "honour all men." An humble Christian is not only disposed to honour the saints in his behaviour; but others also, in all those ways that do not imply a visible approbation of their sins. Thus Abraham, the great pattern of believers, honoured the children of Heth: "Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the people of the land." This was a remarkable instance of humble behaviour towards them that were out of Christ, and that Abraham knew to be accursed; and therefore would by no means suffer his servant to take a wife to his son from among them: and Esau's wives being of these children of Heth, were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah. So Paul honoured Festus: "I am not mad, most noble Festus." Not only will Christian humility dispose us to honour those wicked men that are out of the visible church, but also false brethren and persecutors. As Jacob, when he was in an excellent frame, having just been wrestling all night with God, and received the blessing, honoured Esau, his false and persecuting brother: "Jacob bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother Esau." So he called him lord; and commanded all his family to honour him in like manner.

Thus I have endeavoured to describe the heart

and behaviour of one that is governed by a truly gracious humility, as exactly agreeable to the Scriptures as I am able.

Now, it is out of such a heart as this that all truly holy affections flow. Christian affections are like Mary's precious ointment, which she poured on Christ's head, that filled the whole house with a sweet odour. That was poured out of an alabaster box; so gracious affections flow out to Christ out of a pure heart. That was poured out of a broken box; until the box was broken, the ointment could not flow, nor diffuse its odour: so gracious affections flow out of a broken heart. Gracious affections are also like those of Mary Magdalene, who also pours precious ointment on Christ, out of an alabaster broken box, anointing the feet of Jesus, when she had washed them with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head. All gracious affections, that are a sweet odour to Christ, and that fill the soul of a Christian with a heavenly sweetness and fragrancy, are broken-hearted affections. A truly Christian love, either to God or men, is an humble broken-hearted love. The desires of the saints, however earnest, are humble desires: their hope is an humble hope; and their joy, even when it is unspeakable and full of glory, is an humbled, broken-hearted joy, and leaves the Christian more poor in spirit, and more like a little child, and more disposed to a universal lowliness of behaviour.

CHAPTER VII.

Another thing wherein gracious Affections are distinguished from others, is that they are attended with a change of nature.

All gracious affections, as was shown before, arise from a spiritual understanding, in which the soul has the excellency and glory of divine things discovered to it. But all spiritual discoveries are transforming; and not only make an alteration of the present exercise, sensation, and frame of the soul; but have such power and efficacy, that they make an alteration in the very nature of the soul: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Such power as this is properly divine power, and is peculiar to the Spirit of the Lord: other powers may make a great alteration in men's present frames and feelings: but it is the power of a Creator only that can change the nature, or give a new nature. And no discoveries or illuminations, but those that are divine and supernatural, will have this supernatural effect. But this effect all those discoveries have that are truly divine. The soul is deeply affected by these discoveries, and so affected as to be transformed.

Thus it is with those affections of which the soul is the subject in its conversion. The Scripture representations of conversion strongly imply and sig-

nify a change of nature: such as, "being born again—becoming new creatures—rising from the dead—being renewed in the spirit of the mind—dying to sin, and living to righteousness—putting off the old man, and putting on the new man—a being ingrafted into a new stock—a having a divine seed implanted in the heart—a being made partakers of the divine nature," &c.

Therefore, if there be no great and remarkable abiding change in persons, that think they have experienced a work of conversion, vain are all their imaginations and pretences, however they have been affected.* Conversion (if we may give any credit to the Scripture) is a great and universal change of the man, turning him from sin to God. A man may be restrained from sin, before he is converted; but, when he is converted, he is not only restrained from sin, his very heart and nature is turned from it unto holiness: so that thenceforward he becomes a holy person, and an enemy to sin. If therefore, after a person's high affections, at his supposed first conversion, it comes in a little time, that there is no very sensible or remarkable alteration in him, as to those bad qualities, and evil habits, which before were visible in him, and he is ordinarily under the prevalence of the same kind of dispositions that he used to be, and the same things seem to belong to his character,—he appears as selfish, carnal, as stu-

* "I would not judge of the whole soul's coming to Christ, so much by sudden pangs, as by inward bent. For the whole soul, in affectionate expressions, and actions, may be carried to Christ; but being without this bent and change of affections, is unsound." —*Shepard's Parable*, P. I. p. 203.

pid and perverse, as unchristian and unsavoury as ever,—it is greater evidence against him, than the brightest story of experience that ever was told, is for him. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision, neither high profession, nor low profession, neither a fair story, nor a broken one, avails any thing; but a new creature.

If there be a very great alteration visible in a person for a while; if it be not abiding, but he afterwards returns, in a stated manner, to be much as he used to be; it appears to be no change of nature; for nature is an abiding thing. A swine that is of a filthy nature may be washed, but the swinish nature remains; and a dove that is of a cleanly nature may be defiled, but its cleanly nature remains.*

Indeed, allowances must be made for the natural temper; conversion does not entirely root out the natural temper; those sins to which a man by his natural constitution was most inclined before his conversion, he may be most apt to fall into still. But yet conversion will make a great alteration even with respect to these sins. Though grace while imperfect, does not root out an evil natural temper, yet it is of great power and efficacy to correct it. The change that is wrought in conversion, is a universal change; grace changes a man with respect to what-

* "It is with the soul, as with water; all the cold may be gone, but the native principle of cold remains still. You may remove the burning of lusts, not the blackness of nature. Where the power of sin lies, change of conscience from security to terror, change of life from profaneness to civility, and fashions of the world, to escape the pollutions thereof, change of lusts, nay, quenching them for a time; but the nature is never changed in the best hypocrite that ever was."—*Shepard's Parable*, Part I. p. 194.

ever is sinful in him; the old man is put off, and the new man put on; he is sanctified throughout; and the man becomes a new creature, old things are passed away, and all things are become new; all sin is mortified, constitutional sins, as well as others. If a man, before his conversion, was by his natural constitution especially inclined to lasciviousness or drunkenness, or maliciousness, converting grace will make a great alteration in him, with respect to these evil dispositions; so that however he may be still most in danger of these sins, yet they shall no longer have dominion over him; nor will they any more be properly his character. Yea, true repentance does, in some respects, especially turn a man against his own iniquity, wherein he has been most guilty, and has chiefly dishonoured God. He that forsakes other sins, but saves his leading sin, the iniquity to which he is chiefly inclined, is like Saul, when sent against God's enemies the Amalekites, with a strict charge to save none of them alive, but utterly to destroy them, small and great; who utterly destroyed inferior people, but saved the king, the chief of them all, alive.

Some foolishly make it an argument in favour of their discoveries and affections, that when they are gone, they are left wholly without any life or sense, or any thing beyond what they had before. They think it an evidence that what they experienced was wholly of God, and not of themselves, because, say they, when God is departed, all is gone; they can see and feel nothing, and are no better than they used to be.

It is very true, that all grace and goodness in the hearts of the saints is entirely from God; and they

are universally and immediately dependant on him for it. But yet these persons are mistaken, as to the manner of God's communicating himself and his Holy Spirit, in imparting saving grace to the soul. He gives his Spirit to be united to the faculties of the soul, and to dwell there after the manner of a principle of nature; so that the soul, in being endued with grace, is endued with a new nature: but nature is an abiding thing. All the exercises of grace are entirely from Christ: but those exercises are not from Christ, as something that is alive moves and stirs something that is without life, and yet remains without life; but as having life communicated to it; so as through Christ's power to have inherent in itself a vital nature. In the soul where Christ savingly is there he lives. He does not only live without it, so as violently to actuate it, but he lives in it, so that that also is alive. Grace in the soul is as much from Christ, as the light in a glass, held out in the sun-beams, is from the sun. But this represents the manner of the communication of grace to the soul but in part; because the glass remains as it was, the nature of it not being at all changed, it is as much without any lightsomeness in its nature as ever. But the soul of a saint receives light from the Sun of righteousness, in such a manner, that its nature is changed, and it becomes properly a luminous thing; not only does the sun shine in the saints, but they also become little suns, partaking of the nature of the fountain of their light. In this respect, the manner of their derivation of light, is like that of the lamps in the tabernacle, rather than that of a reflecting glass; which though they were lit up by fire from

heaven, yet thereby became themselves burning shining things. The saints do not only drink of the water of life, that flows from the original fountain; but this water becomes a fountain of water in them, springing up there, and flowing out of them. Grace is compared to a seed implanted, that not only is in the ground, but has hold of it, has root there, grows there, and is an abiding principle of life and nature there.

As it is with spiritual discoveries and affections given at first conversion, so it is in all illuminations and affections of that kind, that persons are the subjects of afterwards; they are all transforming. There is a like divine power and energy in them, as in the first discoveries: and they still reach the bottom of the heart, and affect and alter the very nature of the soul, in proportion to the degree in which they are given. And a transformation of nature is continued and carried on by them to the end of life, until it is brought to perfection in glory. Hence the progress of the work of grace in the hearts of the saints, is represented in Scripture as a continued conversion and renovation of nature. So the apostle exhorts those that were at Rome, "beloved of God, called to be saints," and that were the subjects of God's redeeming mercies, "to be transformed by the renewing of their mind." "I beseech you therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice;—and be not conformed to this world; but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." So the apostle, writing to the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus, that were at Ephesus; and those who (Eph. ii.) "were once dead in trespasses and sins, but

were now quickened, and raised up, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ, and created in Christ Jesus unto good works, that were once far off, but were now made nigh by the blood of Christ, and that were no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, and that were built together for a habitation of God, through the Spirit:" I say, the apostle, writing to these, tells them, "that he ceased not to pray for them, that God would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ; the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they might know, or experience, what was the exceeding greatness of God's power towards them that believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, in the heavenly places." In this, the apostle has respect to the glorious power and work of God, in converting and renewing the soul, as is most plain by the sequel. So the apostle exhorts the same persons "to put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of their minds; and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

There is a sort of high affections that some have from time to time, that leave them without any manner of appearance of an abiding effect. They go off suddenly; so that from the very height of their emotion, and seeming rapture, they pass at once to be quite dead, and void of all sense and activity. It surely is not wont to be thus with high gracious affec-

tions;* they leave a sweet savour and relish of divine things on the heart, and a stronger bent of soul towards God and holiness. As Moses' face not only shone while he was in the mount, extraordinarily conversing with God, but it continued to shine after he came down from the mount. When men have been conversing with Christ in an extraordinary manner, there is a sensible effect of it remains upon them; there is something remarkable in their disposition and frame, which, if we take knowledge of, and trace to its cause, we shall find it is because they have been with Jesus.

CHAPTER VIII.

Truly gracious Affections differ from those that are false and delusive, in that they are attended with the lamb-like, dove-like spirit and temper of Jesus Christ; or, in other words, they naturally beget and promote such a spirit of love, meekness, quietness, forgiveness, and mercy, as appeared in Christ.

The evidence of this in the Scripture is very abundant. If we judge of the nature of Christianity, and the proper spirit of the gospel, by the word of God, this spirit is what may, by way of eminency, be called the Christian spirit; and may be looked upon as the true and distinguishing disposition of the

* "Do you think the Holy Ghost comes on a man as on Balaam, by immediate acting, and then leaves him, and then he has nothing?"—*Shepard's Parable*, Part I. p. 126.

hearts of Christians, as Christians.—When some of the disciples of Christ said something, through inconsideration and infirmity, that was not agreeable to such a spirit, Christ told them, that "they knew not what manner of spirit they were of;" implying that this spirit that I am speaking of, is the proper spirit of his religion and kingdom. All that are truly godly, and real disciples of Christ, have this spirit in them; and not only so, but they are of this spirit: it is the spirit by which they are so possessed and governed, that it is their true and proper character. This is evident by what the wise man says, (having respect plainly to such a spirit as this): "A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit:" and by the particular description Christ gives of the qualities and temper of such as are truly blessed, that shall obtain mercy, and are God's children and heirs: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God." And that this spirit is the special character of the elect of God, is manifested by this scripture: "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another." And the apostle, speaking of that temper and disposition, which he speaks of as the most excellent and essential thing in Christianity, and that without which none are true Christians, and the most glorious profession and gifts are nothing, (calling this spirit by the name of charity,) he describes it thus: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth

not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil." And the same apostle, designedly declaring the distinguishing marks and fruits of true Christian grace, chiefly insists on the things that appertain to such a temper and spirit: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." And so does the apostle James, in describing true grace, or that wisdom that is from above, with that declared design, that others who are of a contrary spirit may not deceive themselves, and lie against the truth, in professing to be Christians when they are not: "If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits."

Every thing that appertains to holiness of heart, does indeed belong to the nature of true Christianity, and the character of Christians; but a spirit of holiness, as appearing in some particular graces, may more especially be called the Christian spirit or temper. There are some amiable qualities and virtues, that more especially agree with the nature of the gospel constitution and Christian profession, because there is a special agreeableness in them, with those divine attributes which God has more remarkably manifested and glorified, in the work of redemption by Jesus Christ, that is the grand subject of the

Christian revelation; and also a special agreeableness with those virtues that were so wonderfully exercised by Jesus Christ towards us in that scheme, and the blessed example he hath therein set us; and likewise because they are peculiarly agreeable to the special drift and design of the work of redemption, and the benefits we thereby receive, and the relation into which it brings us to God and one another. And these virtues are such as humility, meekness, love, forgiveness, and mercy. These things, therefore, especially belong to the character of Christians.

These things are spoken of, as especially the character of Jesus Christ himself, the great head of the Christian church. They are so spoken of in the prophecies of the Old Testament: "Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." So Christ himself speaks of them: "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." The same appears by the name by which Christ is so often called in Scripture, namely, "the Lamb." And as these things are especially the character of Christ, so they are also especially the character of Christians. Christians are Christ-like; none deserve the name of Christians that are not so in their prevailing character. "The new man is renewed, after the image of him that created him." All true Christians "behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image, by his Spirit." The elect are all "predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son of God, that he might be the first-born among many brethren."—"As we have borne the image of the first man, that is earthly, so we must

also bear the image of the heavenly; for as is the earthly, such are they also that are earthly; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly," (1 Cor. xv.) Christ is full of grace; and Christians all receive of his fulness, and grace for grace; that is, there is grace in Christians, answering to grace in Christ; such an answerableness as there is between the wax and the seal; there is character for character: such kind of graces, such a spirit and temper, the same things that belong to Christ's character, belong to theirs. That disposition, wherein Christ's character in a special manner consists, therein does his image in a special manner consist. Christians that shine by reflecting the light of the Sun of Righteousness, do shine with the same sort of brightness, the same mild, sweet, and pleasant beams. These lamps of the spiritual temple, that are enkindled by fire from heaven, burn with the same sort of flame. The branch is of the same nature with the stock and root, has the same sap, and bears the same sort of fruit. The members have the same kind of life with the head. It would be strange if Christians should not be of the same temper and spirit that Christ is of; when they are his flesh and his bone, yea, are one spirit; and live so, that it is not they that live, but Christ that lives in them. A Christian spirit is Christ's mark that he sets upon the souls of his people; his seal in their foreheads, bearing his image and superscription. Christians are the followers of Christ; and they are so, as they are obedient to that call of Christ: "Come to me, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart." They follow him as the Lamb: "These are they which follow the

Lamb whithersoever he goeth." True Christians are as it were clothed with the meek, quiet, and loving temper of Christ; for as many as are in Christ have put on Christ. And in this respect the church is clothed with the sun, not only by being clothed with his imputed righteousness, but also by being adorned with his graces. Christ, the great Shepherd, is himself a Lamb, and believers are also lambs; all the flock are lambs: "Feed my lambs." "I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves." The redemption of the church by Christ, from the power of the devil, was typified of old, by David's delivering the lamb out of the mouth of the lion and the bear.

That such is the very nature of the Christian spirit, or the spirit that worketh in Christ, and in his members, is evident by this, that the dove is the very symbol or emblem, chosen of God, to represent it. Those things are fittest emblems of other things, which do best represent that which is most distinguishing in their nature. The Spirit that descended on Christ, when he was anointed of the Father, descended on him like a dove. The dove is a noted emblem of meekness, harmlessness, peace, and love. But the same Spirit that descended on the head of the church, descends to the members. "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts." "And if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." There is but one Spirit to the whole mystical body, head and members. Christ breathes his own Spirit on his disciples. As Christ was anointed with the Holy Ghost, descending on him like a dove, so Christians also "have an anointing

from the Holy One." And they are anointed with the same oil; it is the same precious ointment on the head, that goes down to the skirts of the garments. And on both it is a spirit of peace and love: "Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments." The oil on Aaron's garments had the same sweet and inimitable odour with that on his head; the smell of the same sweet spices, Christian affections, and a Christian behaviour, is but the flowing out of the savour of Christ's sweet ointments. Because the church has a dovelike temper and disposition, therefore it is said of her that she has doves' eyes: "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks;"—the same that is said of Christ, "His eyes are as the eyes of doves." And the church is frequently compared to a dove in Scripture: "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock." "Open to me, my love, my dove." And, "My dove, my undefiled, is but one." "Ye shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." "O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove unto the multitude of the wicked." The dove that Noah sent out of the ark, that could find no rest for the sole of her foot until she returned, was a type of a true saint.

Meekness is so much the character of the saints, that the meek and the godly are used as synonymous terms in Scripture: the wicked and the meek are set in opposition one to another, as wicked and godly:

"Yet a little while and the wicked shall not be; but the meek shall inherit the earth." "The Lord lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground."

It is doubtless very much on this account that Christ represents all his disciples, all the heirs of heaven, as little children: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in nowise lose his reward." "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones," &c. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones." "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." "Little children, yet a little while I am with you."—Little children are innocent and harmless; they do not do a great deal of mischief in the world; men need not be afraid of them; they are no dangerous sort of persons; their anger does not last long, they do not lay up injuries in high resentment, entertaining deep and rooted malice. So Christians in malice are children, 1 Cor. xiv. 20. Little children are not guileful and deceitful, but plain and simple; they are not versed in the arts of fiction and deceit; and are strangers to artful disguises. They are yieldable and flexable, and not wilful and obstinate; do not trust to their own understanding, but rely on the instructions of parents, and others of superior understanding. Here is therefore a fit and lively emblem of the followers of the Lamb. Persons being thus like little children, is not only a thing highly commendable, and of what

Christians approve, and aim at, and to which some of extraordinary proficiency do attain; but it is their universal character, and absolutely necessary in order to entering into the kingdom of heaven; unless Christ was mistaken: "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."

But here some may be ready to say, Is there no such thing as Christian fortitude, and boldness for Christ, being good soldiers in the Christian warfare, and coming out bold against the enemies of Christ and his people?

To which I answer, There doubtless is such a thing. The whole Christian life is compared, and fitly so, to a warfare. And the most eminent Christians are the best soldiers, endued with the greatest degrees of Christian fortitude. And it is the duty of God's people to be steadfast and vigorous in their opposition to the designs and ways of such as are endeavouring to overthrow the kingdom of Christ, and the interest of religion. But yet many persons seem to be quite mistaken concerning the nature of Christian fortitude. It is an exceedingly diverse thing from a brutal fierceness, or the boldness of beasts of prey. True Christian fortitude consists in strength of mind, through grace, exerted in two things; in ruling and suppressing the evil and unruly passions and affections of the mind; and in steadfastly and freely exerting, and following good affections and dispositions, without being hindered by sinful fear,

or the opposition of enemies. But the passions that are restrained and kept under, in the exercise of this Christian strength and fortitude, are those very passions that are vigorously and violently exerted in a false boldness for Christ. And those affections that are vigorously exerted in true fortitude, are those Christian holy affections, that are directly contrary to them. Though Christian fortitude appears in withstanding and counteracting the enemies that are without us; yet it much more appears in resisting and suppressing the enemies that are within; because they are our worst and strongest enemies, and have greatest advantage against us. The strength of the good soldier of Jesus Christ, appears in nothing more than in steadfastly maintaining the holy calm, meekness, sweetness, and benevolence of his mind, amidst all the storms, injuries, strange behaviour, and surprising acts and events of this evil and unreasonable world. The Scripture seems to intimate that true fortitude consists chiefly in this: "He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city."

The surest and most direct way in the world, to make a right judgment what a holy fortitude is, in fighting with God's enemies, is to look to the Captain of all God's hosts, and our great leader and example, and see wherein his fortitude and valour appeared in his chief conflict, and in the time of the greatest battle that ever was, or ever will be fought with these enemies, when he fought with them all alone, and of the people there was none with him, and exercised his fortitude in the highest degree that e ver he did, and got that glorious victory that will be

celebrated in the praises and triumphs of all the hosts of heaven, throughout all eternity—even to Jesus Christ in the time of his last sufferings, when his enemies in earth and hell made their most violent attack upon him, compassing him round on every side, like rending and roaring lions. Doubtless here we shall see the fortitude of a holy warrior and champion in the cause of God, in its highest perfection and greatest lustre, and an example fit for the soldiers to follow that fight under this Captain. But how did he show his holy boldness and valour at that time? Not in the exercise of any fiery passions; not in fierce and violent speeches, and vehemently declaiming against the intolerable wickedness of opposers, giving them their own in plain terms; but in not opening his mouth when afflicted and oppressed, in going as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, not opening his mouth; praying that the Father would forgive his cruel enemies, because they knew not what they did; not shedding others' blood, but with all-conquering patience and love, shedding his own. Indeed one of his disciples, that made a forward pretence to boldness for Christ, and confidently declared he would sooner die with Christ than deny him, began to lay about him with a sword; but Christ meekly rebukes him, and heals the wound he gives. And never was the patience, meekness, love, and forgiveness of Christ, in such glorious manifestation as at that time. Never did he appear so much a lamb, and never did he show so much of the dove-like spirit, as at that time. If therefore we see any of the followers of Christ, in the midst of the most violent, unreasonable, and

wicked opposition of God's and his own enemies, maintaining, under all this temptation, the humility, quietness, and gentleness of a lamb, and the harmlessness, and love, and sweetness of a dove, we may well judge that here is a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

When persons are fierce and violent, and exert their sharp and bitter passions, it shows weakness, instead of strength and fortitude: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.—For ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"

There is a pretended boldness for Christ that arises from no better principle than pride. A man may be forward to expose himself to the dislike of the world, and even to provoke their displeasure out of pride. For it is the nature of spiritual pride to cause men to seek distinction and singularity: and so oftentimes to set themselves at war with those that they call carnal, that they may be more highly exalted among their party. True boldness for Christ is universal, and overcomes all, and carries men above the displeasure of friends and foes; so that they will forsake all rather than Christ; and will rather offend all parties, and be thought meanly of by all, than offend Christ. And that duty which tries whether a man is willing to be despised by those that are of his own party, and thought the least worthy to be regarded by them, is a much more proper trial of his boldness for Christ, than his being forward to expose himself to the reproach of opposers. The apostle avoided seeking glory, not only of Heathens and

Jews, but of Christians; as he declares: "Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ." He is bold for Christ, that has Christian fortitude enough to confess his fault openly, when he has committed one that requires it, and as it were to come down upon his knees before opposers. Such things as these are a vastly greater evidence of holy boldness, than resolutely and fiercely confronting opposers.*

As some are much mistaken concerning the nature of true boldness for Christ, so they are concerning Christian zeal. It is indeed a flame, but a sweet one; or rather, it is the heat and fervour of a sweet flame. For the flame, of which it is the heat, is no other than that of divine love, or Christian charity; which is the sweetest and most benevolent thing that is, or can be, in the heart of man or angel. Zeal is the fervour of this flame, as it ardently and vigorously goes out towards the good that is its object, in desires, and pursuit after it; and so consequently in opposition to the evil that is contrary to, and impedes it. There is indeed opposition, and vigorous opposition, that is a part of it, or rather is an attendant of it; but it is against things, and not persons. Bitterness against the persons of men is no part of, but is very contrary to it; insomuch that the warmer true zeal is, and the higher it is raised, so much the farther are persons

* Mr. Shepard, speaking of hypocrites affecting applause, says, "Hence men forsake their friends, and trample under foot the scorns of the world; they have credit elsewhere. To maintain their interest in the love of godly men, they will suffer much."—*Parable of the Ten Virgins*, Part I. p. 180.

from such bitterness, and so much fuller of love, both to the evil and to the good. As appears from what has been just now observed, it is no other, in its very nature and essence, than the fervour of a spirit of Christian love. And as to the opposition there is in it to things, it is firstly and chiefly against the evil things in the person himself, who has this zeal; against the enemies of God and holiness, that are in his own heart; (as these are most in his view, and what he has most to do with;) and but secondarily against the sins of others. And therefore there is nothing in a true Christian zeal, that is contrary to that spirit of meekness, gentleness, and love, that spirit of a little child, a lamb and dove, that has been spoken of; but it is entirely agreeable to, and tends to promote it.

But to say something particularly concerning this Christian spirit, as exercised in these three things, forgiveness, love, and mercy; I would observe that the Scripture is very clear and express concerning the absolute necessity of each of these, as belonging to the temper and character of every Christian.

It is so as to a forgiving spirit, or a disposition to overlook and forgive injuries. Christ gives it both as a negative and positive evidence; and is express in teaching us, that if we are of such a spirit, it is a sign that we are in a state of forgiveness and favour ourselves; and that if we are not of such a spirit, we are not forgiven of God; and seems to take special care that we should take good notice of it, and always bear it on our minds: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.—For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Christ expresses the same again at another time, in the parable of the servant that owed his Lord ten thousand talents, that would not forgive his fellow-servant an hundred pence, and therefore was delivered to the tormentors. In the application of the parable Christ says, " So likewise shall my heavenly Father do, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

And that all true saints are of a loving, benevolent, and beneficent temper, the Scripture is very plain and abundant. Without it, the apostle tells us, though we should speak with the tongues of men and angels, we are as a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal; and that though we have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, yet without this spirit we are nothing. And there is no one virtue or disposition of the mind that is so often, and so expressly insisted on, in the marks that are laid down in the New Testament, whereby to know true Christians. It is often given as a sign that is peculiarly distinguishing, by which all may know Christ's disciples, and by which they may know themselves; and is often laid down, both as a negative and positive evidence. Christ calls the law of love, by way of eminency, his commandment: " A new commandment give I unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, That ye also love one another." " This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." " These things I command you, that ye love one another." " By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples,

if ye have love one to another." And, (still with a special reference to this, which he calls his commandment), "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." The beloved disciple, who had so much of this sweet temper himself, abundantly insists on it in his epistles. None of the apostles are so frequent in laying down express signs of grace, for professors to try themselves by, as he; and, in his signs, he insists scarcely on any thing else but a spirit of Christian love, and an agreeable practice: "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him." "We know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother abideth in death." "My little children, let us not love in word, and in tongue; but in deed, and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." "This is his commandment, That we should love one another. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him: and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is love." "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, because he hath given us of his Spirit." "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." "If a

man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

And the Scripture is as plain as it is possible it should be, that none are true saints but those whose true character it is, that they are of a disposition to pity and relieve their fellow-creatures, that are poor, indigent, and afflicted: "The righteous showeth mercy, and giveth." "He is ever merciful, and lendeth." "A good man showeth favour, and lendeth.—He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor." "He that honoureth God, hath mercy on the poor." "The righteous giveth, and spareth not." "He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the Lord." "Pure religion, and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction," &c. "For I have desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." "Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy." "I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love." "For he shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy.—What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his

bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"—Christ, in that description he gives of the day of judgment, Matth. xxv. (which is the most particular that we have in all the Bible,) represents that judgment will be passed that day according as men have been found to have been of a merciful spirit and practice, or otherwise. Christ's design in giving such a description of the process of that day, is plainly to possess all his followers with that apprehension, that unless this was their spirit and practice, there was no hope of their being accepted and owned by him at that day. Therefore, this is an apprehension with which we ought to be possessed. We find in Scripture, that a righteous man and a merciful man are synonymous expressions: "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come."

Thus we see how full, clear, and abundant, the evidence from Scripture is, that those who are truly gracious are under the government of that lamb-like, dove-like Spirit of Jesus Christ, and that this is essentially and eminently the nature of the saving grace of the gospel, and the proper spirit of true Christianity. We may, therefore, undoubtedly determine, that all truly Christian affections are attended with such a spirit, and that this is the natural tendency of the fear and hope, the sorrow and the joy, the confidence and the zeal of true Christians.

I do not say that true Christians have no remains of a contrary spirit, and can never, in any instances, be guilty of a behaviour contrary to such a spirit.

But this I affirm, and shall affirm, until I deny the Bible to be any thing worth, that every thing in Christians that belongs to true Christianity is of this tendency, and works this way; and that there is no true Christian upon earth but is so under the prevailing power of such a spirit, that he is properly denominated from it, and it is truly and justly his character: and that, therefore, ministers, and others, have no warrant from Christ to encourage persons that are of a contrary character and behaviour, to think they are converted, because they tell a fair story of illuminations and discoveries. In so doing, they would set up their own wisdom against Christ's, and judge without, and against that rule by which Christ has declared all men should know his disciples. Some persons place religion so much in certain transient illuminations and impressions, (especially if they are in such a particular method and order,) and so little in the spirit and temper are persons of, that they greatly deform religion, and form notions of Christianity quite different from what it is, as delineated in the Scriptures. The Scripture knows of no such true Christians as are of a sordid, selfish, cross, and contentious spirit. Nothing can be invented that is a greater absurdity than a morose, hard, close, high-spirited, spiteful, true Christian. We must learn the way of bringing men to rules, and not rules to men, and so strain and stretch the rules of God's word, to take in ourselves, and some of our neighbours, until we make them wholly of none effect.

It is true, that allowances must be made for men's natural temper, with regard to these things, as well others; but not such allowances as to allow men,

that once were wolves and serpents, to be now converted, without any remarkable change in the spirit of their mind. The change made by true conversion is wont to be most remarkable and sensible, with respect to what before was the wickedness of which the person was most notoriously guilty. Grace has as great a tendency to restrain and mortify such sins, as are contrary to the spirit that has been spoken of, as it has to mortify drunkenness and lasciviousness. Yea, the Scripture represents the change wrought by gospel-grace, as especially appearing in an alteration of the former sort: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." And to the same purpose is Isa. lxv. 25. Accordingly, we find, that in the primitive times of the Christian church, converts were remarkably changed in this respect: Tit. iii. 3. "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,—he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." And Col. iii. 7. "In the which ye also walked some

time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth."

CHAPTER IX.

Gracious Affections soften the heart, and are attended and followed with a Christian tenderness of spirit.

False affections, however persons may seem to be melted by them while they are new, yet have a tendency in the end to harden the heart. A disposition to some kind of passions may be established; such as imply self-seeking, self-exaltation, and opposition to others. But false affections with the delusion that attends them, finally tend to stupify the mind, and shut it up against those affections wherein tenderness of heart consists: and the effect of them at last is, that persons in the settled frame of their minds become less affected with their present and past sins, and less conscientious with respect to future sins, less moved with the warnings and cautions of God's words, or God's chastisements in his providence, more careless of the frame of their hearts, and the manner and tendency of their behaviour, less quick-sighted to discern what is sinful, less afraid of the appearance of evil, than they were under legal awakenings and fears of hell. Now that they have been the subjects of such and such impressions and affections, and have a high opinion of themselves, and look on their state to be safe, they can be much

more easy than before, in living in the neglect of duties that are troublesome and inconvenient; and are much more slow and partial in complying with difficult commands; are in no measure so alarmed at the appearance of their own defects and transgressions; are emboldened to favour themselves more, with respect to the labour, and painful care and exactness in their walk, and more easily yield to temptations, and the solicitations of their lust; and have far less care of their behaviour, when they come into the holy presence of God, in the time of public or private worship. Formerly, it may be, under legal convictions, they took much pains in religion, and denied themselves in many things; but now that they think themselves out of danger of hell, they very much put off the burden of the cross, and save themselves the trouble of difficult duties, and allow themselves more of the comfort of the enjoyment of their ease and their lusts.

Such persons as these, instead of embracing Christ as their Saviour from sin, they trust in him as the Saviour of their sins; instead of flying to him as their refuge from their spiritual enemies, they make use of him as the defence of their spiritual enemies, from God, and to strengthen them against him. They make Christ the minister of sin, and great officer and vicegerent of the devil, to strengthen his interest, and make him above all things in the world strong against Jehovah; so that they may sin against him with courage, and without any fear, being effectually secured from restraints, by his most solemn warnings and most awful threatenings. They trust in Christ to preserve to them the quiet enjoyment of their sins,

and to be their shield to defend them from God's displeasure; while they come close to him, even to his bosom, the place of his children, to fight against him, with their mortal weapons hid under their skirts.*

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* "These are hypocrites that believe, but fail in regard of the use of the gospel, and of the Lord Jesus. And these we read of, Jude 3. namely, of some men that did turn grace into wantonness. For therein appears the exceeding evil of a man's heart, that not only the law, but also the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus, works in him all manner of unrighteousness. And it is too common for men at the first work of conversion, then to cry, Oh, for grace and Christ, and afterwards grow licentious, live and die in the breach of the law, and take their warrant for their course from the gospel."—*Shepard's Parable*, Part. I. p. 120.

Again, p. 232. Mr. Shepard speaks of such hypocrites as those, "who like strange eggs, being put into the same nest, where honest men have lived, they have been hatched up; and when they are young, keep their nest, and live by crying and opening their mouths wide after the Lord, and the food of his word; but when their wings are grown, and they have got some affections, some knowledge, some hope of mercy, are hardened thereby to fly from God." And adds, "Can that man be good, whom God's grace makes worse?"

Again, Part II. p. 167. "When men fly to Christ in times of peace, that so they may preserve their sins with greater peace of conscience; so that sin makes them fly to Christ, as well as misery, not that they may destroy and abolish sin, but that they may be preserved in their sins with peace; then men may be said to apprehend Christ only by a seeming faith.—Many a heart secretly saith this, If I can have my sin, and peace, and conscience quiet for the present, and God merciful to pardon it afterwards; hence he doth rely (as he saith) only on the mercy of God in Christ: and now this hardens and blinds him, and makes him secure, and his faith is sermon-proof, nothing stirs him.—And were it not for their faith they should despair, but that keeps them up. And now they think, if they have any trouble of mind, the devil troubles them; and so make Christ and faith protectors of sin, not purifiers from sin; which is most dreadful; turning grace to wantonness, as they did sacrifice. So these would sin under the shadow of Christ, because the shadow is good and sweet, Micah iii. 11. They had subtle sly ends in good duties; for therein may lie a man's sin: yet they lean upon the Lord.—When money-changers came into the temple, 'You have made it a den of thieves.' Thieves when hunted fly to their den or cave, and there they are secure against all searchers, and hue-and-cries: so

However, some of these, at the same time, make a great profession of love to God, and assurance of his favour, and great joy in tasting the sweetness of his love.

After this manner they trusted in Christ that the apostle Jude speaks of, who crept in among the saints unknown; but were really ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness. These are they that trust in their being righteous; and because God has promised that the righteous shall surely live, or certainly be saved, are therefore emboldened to commit iniquity, whom God threatens, Ezek. xxxiii. 13. "When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it."

Gracious affections are of a quite contrary tendency; they turn a heart of stone more and more into a heart of flesh. A holy love and hope are principles that are vastly more efficacious upon the heart, to make it tender, and to fill it with a dread of sin, or whatever might displease and offend God, and to engage it to watchfulness, and care, and strictness, than a slavish fear of hell. Gracious affections, as was observed before, flow out of a contrite heart, or (as the word signifies) a bruised heart, bruised and broken with godly sorrow; which makes the heart

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here. But Christ whipped them out. So when men are pursued with cries and fears of conscience, away to Christ they go as to their den, not as saints to pray and lament out the life of their sin there, but to preserve their sin. This is vile; will the Lord receive such?"

tender, as bruised flesh is tender, and easily hurt. Godly sorrow has much greater influence to make the heart tender, than mere legal sorrow from selfish principles.

The tenderness of the heart of a true Christian, is elegantly signified by our Saviour in his comparing such a one to a little child. The flesh of a little child is very tender; so is the heart of one that is new-born. This is represented in what we are told of Naaman's cure of his leprosy, by his washing in Jordan, at the direction of the prophet; which was undoubtedly a type of the renewing of the soul, by washing in the laver of regeneration. We are told, "that he went down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child." Not only is the flesh of a little child tender, but his mind is tender. A little child has his heart easily moved, wrought upon and bowed: so is a Christian in spiritual things. A little child is apt to be affected with sympathy, to weep with them that weep, and cannot well bear to see others in distress: so it is with a Christian.* A little child is easily won by kindness: so is a Christian. A little child is easily affected with grief at temporal evils, and has his heart melted and falls a-weeping: thus tender is the heart of a Christian, with regard to the evil of sin. A little child is easily affrighted at the appearance of outward evils, or any thing that threatens its hurt: so is a Christian apt to be alarmed at the appearance of moral evil, and any thing that threatens the hurt of

* John xi. 35. Rom. xii. 15. 1 Cor. xii. 26.

the soul. A little child, when it meets enemies, or fierce beasts, is not apt to trust to its own strength, but flies to its parents for refuge: so a saint is not self-confident in engaging spiritual enemies, but flies to Christ. A little child is apt to be suspicious of evil in places of danger, afraid in the dark, afraid when left alone, or far from home: so is a saint apt to be sensible of his spiritual dangers, jealous of himself, full of fear when he cannot see his way plainly before him, afraid to be left alone, and to be at a distance from God: "Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief." A little child is apt to be afraid of superiors, and to dread their anger, and tremble at their frowns and threatenings; so is a true saint with respect to God: "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments." "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and trembleth at my word." "Hear ye the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word." "Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel." "According to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God." A little child approaches superiors with awe: so do the saints approach God with holy awe and reverence: "Shall not his excellency make you afraid? and his dread fall upon you?" Holy fear is so much the nature of true godliness, that it is called in Scripture by no other name more frequently, than the *fear* of God.

Hence gracious affections do not tend to make men bold, forward, noisy, and boisterous; but rather to speak trembling—"When Ephraim spake trembling,

he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died,"—and to clothe with a kind of holy fear in all their behaviour towards God and man; agreeable to Psal. ii. 11. 1 Pet. iii. 15. 2 Cor. vii. 15. Eph. vi. 5. 1 Pet. iii. 2. Rom. xi. 20.

But here some may object, and say, Is there no such thing as a holy boldness in prayer, and the duties of divine worship? I answer, there is doubtless such a thing; and it is chiefly to be found in eminent saints, persons of great degrees of faith and love. But this holy boldness is not in the least opposite to reverence, though it be to disunion and servility. It abolishes or lessens that disposition which arises from moral distance or alienation, and also distance of relation, as that of a slave; but not at all that which becomes the natural distance; whereby we are infinitely inferior. No boldness in poor sinful worms of the dust, that have a right sight of God and themselves, will prompt them to approach God with less fear and reverence, than spotless and glorious angels in heaven, who cover their faces before his throne. Rebecca, (who, in her marriage with Isaac, in almost all its circumstances, was manifestly a great type of the church, the spouse of Christ,) when she meets Isaac, lights off from her camel, and takes a vail, and covers herself; although she was brought to him as his bride, to be with him, in the nearest relation, and most intimate union, in which mankind are ever united to one another.* Elijah, that great prophet, who had so much holy familiarity with God, at a time of special nearness to God, even

* Dr. Ames, in his Cases of Conscience, Book III. chap. iv. speaks of a holy modesty in the worship of God, as one sign of true humility.

when he conversed with him in the mount, wrapped his face in his mantle. Which was not because he was terrified with any servile fear, by the terrible wind, and earthquake, and fire; but after these were all over, and God spake to him as a friend, in a still small voice: 1 Kings xix. 12. "And after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle." And Moses, with whom God spake face to face, as a man speaks with his friend, and was distinguished from all the prophets, in the familiarity with God to which he was admitted; at a time when he was brought nearest of all, when God showed him his glory in that same mount where he afterwards spake to Elijah, "He made haste, and bowed his head towards the earth, and worshipped."—There is in some persons a most unsuitable and unsufferable boldness, in their addresses to the great Jehovah, in an affectation of a holy boldness, and ostentation of eminent nearness and familiarity; the very thoughts of which would make them shrink into nothing, with horror and confusion, if they saw the distance that is between God and them. They are like the Pharisee, that boldly came up near, in a confidence of his own eminency in holiness. Whereas, if they saw their vileness, they would be more like the publican, that "stood afar off, and durst not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven; but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." It becomes such sinful creatures as we, to approach a holy God (although with faith, and without terror, yet) with contrition, and penitent shame and confusion of face. It is foretold that this should be the disposition of the church, in the time of her

highest privileges on earth, in her latter day of glory, when God should remarkably comfort her, by revealing his covenant-mercy to her: "I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed.—And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." The woman that we read of in the seventh chapter of Luke, that was an eminent saint, and had much of that true love which casts out fear, by Christ's own testimony, approached Christ in an amiable and acceptable manner, when she came with that humble modesty, reverence, and shame, when she stood at his feet, weeping behind him, as not being fit to appear before his face, and washed his feet with her tears.

One reason why gracious affections are attended with this tenderness of spirit, is, that true grace tends to promote convictions of conscience. Persons are wont to have convictions of conscience before they have any grace; and if afterwards they are truly converted, and have true repentance, and joy, and peace in believing, this has a tendency to put an end to terrors, but has no tendency to put an end to convictions of sin, but to increase them. It does not stupify a man's conscience, but makes it more sensible, more easily and thoroughly discerning the sinfulness of that which is sinful, and receiving a greater conviction of the heinous and dreadful nature of sin, susceptive of a quicker and deeper sense of it, and

more convinced of his own sinfulness, and wickedness of his heart; and consequently, it has a tendency to make him more jealous of his heart. Grace tends to give the soul a further and better conviction of the same things concerning sin, than it was convinced of under a legal work of the Spirit of God; namely, its great contrariety to the will, and law, and honour of God, the greatness of God's hatred of it, and displeasure against it, and the dreadful punishment it exposes to, and deserves. And not only so, but it convinces the soul of something further concerning sin, that it saw nothing of, while only under legal convictions; and that is, the infinitely hateful nature of sin, and its dreadfulness upon that account. And this makes the heart tender with respect to sin; like David's heart that smote him, when he had cut off Saul's skirt. The heart of a true penitent is like a burnt child, that dreads the fire. Whereas, on the contrary, he that has had a counterfeit repentance, and false comforts and joys, is like iron that has been suddenly heated and quenched; it becomes much harder than before. A false conversion puts an end to convictions of conscience; and so either takes away, or much diminishes, that conscientiousness which was manifested under a work of the law.

All gracious affections have a tendency to promote this Christian tenderness of heart, not only a godly sorrow, but also a gracious joy: "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." As also a gracious hope: "Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy." "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy."—Yea,

the most confident and assured hope, that is truly gracious, has this tendency. The higher a holy hope is raised, the more there is of this Christian tenderness. The banishing of a servile fear, by a holy assurance, is attended with a proportionable increase of a reverential fear. The diminishing of the fear of the fruits of God's displeasure in future punishment, is attended with a proportionable increase of fear of his displeasure itself; the diminishing of the fear of hell, with an increase of the fear of sin. The vanishing of jealousies of the person's state, is attended with a proportionable increase of jealousy of heart, in a distrust of its strength, wisdom, stability, faithfulness, &c. The less apt he is to be afraid of natural evil, having his heart fixed in trusting in God, and so, not afraid of evil tidings, the more apt he is to be alarmed with the appearance of moral evil, or the evil of sin. As he has more holy boldness, so he has less of self-confidence, and a forward assuming boldness, and more modesty. As he is more sure than others of deliverance from hell, so he has more of a sense of the desert of it. He is less apt than others to be shaken in faith; but more apt than others to be moved with solemn warnings, and with God's frowns, and with the calamities of others. He has the firmest comfort, but the softest heart; richer than others, but poorest of all in spirit; the tallest and strongest saint, but the least and tenderest child among them.

CHAPTER X.

Another thing wherein Affections that are truly gracious and holy differ from those that are false, is beautiful symmetry and proportion.

Not that the symmetry of the virtues and gracious affections of the saints in this life is perfect; it oftentimes is in many things defective, through the imperfection of grace, for want of proper instructions, through errors in judgment, or some particular unhappiness of natural temper, or defects in education, and many other disadvantages that might be mentioned. But yet there is, in nowise, that monstrous disproportion in gracious affections, and the various parts of true religion in the saints, that is very commonly to be observed in the false religion and counterfeit graces of hypocrites.

In the truly holy affections of the saints is found that proportion, which is the natural consequences of the universality of their sanctification. They have the whole image of Christ upon them; they have put off the old man, and have put on the new man, entire in all its parts and members. It hath pleased the Father that in Christ all fulness should dwell. There is in him every grace; he is full of grace and truth: and they that are Christ's, do "of his fulness receive grace for grace;" that is, there is every grace in them which is in Christ: grace for grace; that is, grace answerable to grace. There is no grace in Christ but there is its image in believers to answer it. The

image is a true image; and there is something of the same beautiful proportion in the image which is in the original—there is feature for feature, and member for member. There is symmetry and beauty in God's workmanship. The natural body, which God hath made, consists of many members; and all are in a beautiful proportion: so it is in the new man, consisting of various graces and affections. The body of one that was born a perfect child may fail of exact proportion, through distemper, and the weakness and wounds of some of its members; yet the disproportion is in no measure like that of those that are born monsters.

It is with hypocrites as it was with Ephraim of old, at a time when God greatly complains of their hypocrisy: "Ephraim is a cake not turned," half roasted and half raw—there is commonly no manner of uniformity in their affections.

There is in many of them a great partiality, with regard to the several kinds of religious affections: great affections in some things, and no manner of proportion in others.—A holy hope and holy fear go together in the saints, Psalm xxxiii. 18. and cxlvii. 11. But in some of these is the most confident hope, while they are void of reverence, self-jealousy, and caution, and have to a great degree cast off fear. In the saints, joy and holy fear go together, though the joy be ever so great; as it was with the disciples, in that joyful morning of Christ's resurrection: "And they departed quickly from the sepulchre, with fear and great joy."* But many of these rejoice without

* "Renewed care and diligence follows the sealings of the Spirit. Now is the soul at the foot of Christ, as Mary was at the

trembling: their joy is of that sort, that it is truly opposite to godly fear.

But, particularly, one great difference between saints and hypocrites is this, that the joy and comfort of the former is attended with godly sorrow and mourning for sin. They have not only sorrow to prepare them for their first comfort, but after they are comforted and their joy established. As it is foretold of the church of God, that they should mourn and loathe themselves for their sins, after they were returned from the captivity, and were settled in the land of Canaan, the land of rest, and the land that flowed with milk and honey: "And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers. And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed." A true saint is like a little child in this respect; he never had any godly sorrow before he was born again, but since he has it often in exercise: as a little child, before it is born, and while it remains in darkness, never cries; but as soon as ever it sees the light it begins to cry; and thenceforward is often crying. Although Christ hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, so that we are freed from the sorrow of punishment, and may now sweetly feed upon the comforts Christ hath purchased for us; yet that does not hinder our feeding on these

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sepulchre, with fear and great joy. He that travels the road with a rich treasure about him is afraid of a thief in every bush."—*Flavel's Sacramental Meditations*, Med. 4.

comforts from being attended with the sorrow of repentance. As of old, the children of Israel were commanded evermore to feed upon the paschal lamb, with bitter herbs.* True saints are spoken of, in

* "If repentance accompanies faith, it is no presumption to believe.—Many know the sin, and hence believe in Christ, trust in Christ, and there is an end of their faith. But what confession and sorrow for sin? what more love to Christ follows this faith? Truly none. Nay, their faith is the cause why they have none. For they think, If I trust in Christ to forgive me, he will do it; and there is an end of the business. Verily, this hedge faith, this bramble faith, that catches hold on Christ, and pricks and scratches Christ, by more impenitency, more contempt of him, is mere presumption; which shall one day be burned up and destroyed by the fire of God's jealousy. Fy upon that faith, that serves only to keep a man from being tormented before his time! Your sins would be your sorrows, but that your faith quiets you. But if faith be accompanied with repentance, mourning for sin, more esteem of God's grace in Christ; so that nothing breaks thy heart more than the thoughts of Christ's unchangeable love to one so vile, and this love makes thee love much, and love him the more; as thy sin increaseth, so thou desirest thy love's increase; and now the stream of thy thoughts run, how thou mayest live to him that died for thee: this was Mary's faith, who sat at Christ's feet weeping, washing them with her tears, and loving much, because much was forgiven."—*Shepard's Sound Believer*, pp. 128, 129.

"You shall know godly sorrow (says Dr. Preston, in his Discourse on Paul's Conversion) by the continuance of it: it is constant; but worldly sorrow is but a passion of the mind; it changes, it lasts not. Though for the present it may be violent and strong, and work much outwardly, yet it comes but by fits, and continues not: like a land flood, which violently, for the present, overflows the banks; but it will away again; it is not always thus.—But godly sorrow is like a spring, that still keeps his running, both winter and summer, wet and dry, in heat and cold, early and late. So this godly sorrow is the same in a regenerate man still: take him when you will, he is still sorrowing for sin. This godly sorrow stands like the centre of the earth, which removes not, but still remains."

"I am persuaded, many a man's heart is kept from breaking and mourning, because of this. He saith, it may be, that he is a vile sinner; but I trust in Christ, &c. If they do go to Christ to destroy their sin, this makes them more secure in their sin. For, say they, I cannot help it, and Christ must do all. Whereas faith makes the soul mourn after the Lord the more."—*Shepard's Parable of the Ten Virgins*, Part II. p. 168.

Scripture, not only as those that have mourned for sin, but as those that do mourn, whose manner it is still to mourn: "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

Not only is there often in hypocrites an essential deficiency as to the various kinds of religious affections, but also a strange partiality and disproportion, in the same affections, with regard to different objects.

Thus, as to the affection of love, some make high pretences and a great show of love to God and Christ, and, it may be, have been greatly affected with what they have heard or thought concerning them: but they have not a spirit of love and benevolence towards men, but are disposed to contention, envy, revenge, and evil-speaking; and will suffer an old grudge to rest in their bosoms towards a neighbour, for seven years together, if not twice seven years; living in real ill-will and bitterness of spirit towards him: and, it may be, in their dealings with their neighbours, are not very strict and conscientious in observing the rule of "doing to others as they would that they should do to them." "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" And, on the other hand, there are others, that appear as if they had a great deal of benevolence to men, are very good-natured and generous in their way, but have no love to God.

And, as to love to men, there are some that have flowing affections to some; but their love is far from being of so extensive and universal a nature as a truly Christian love is. They are full of dear affections to some, and full of bitterness towards others. They

are knit to their own party; those that approve of them they love and admire, but are fierce against those that oppose and dislike them. "Be like your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good.—For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye: do not even the publicans the same?" Some show a great affection to their neighbours, and pretend to be ravished with the company of the children of God abroad; and, at the same time, are uncomfortable and churlish towards their wives and other near relations at home, and are very negligent of relative duties. And as to the great love to sinners and opposers of religion, and the great concern for their souls, of which there is an appearance in some, even to extreme distress and agony, singling out a particular person, from among a multitude, for its object, there being at the same time no general compassion to sinners, that are in equally miserable circumstances, but what is in a monstrous disproportion; this seems not to be of the nature of a gracious affection. Not that I suppose it to be at all strange, that pity to the perishing souls of sinners should be to a degree of agony, if other things are answerable; or that a truly gracious compassion to souls should be exercised much more to some persons than others that are equally miserable, especially on some particular occasions. There may many things happen to fix the mind and affect the heart, with respect to a particular person, at such a juncture; and, without doubt, some saints have been in great distress for the souls of particular persons, so as to be, as it were, in travail for them; but when persons appear, at particular times, in racking agonies

for the soul of some single person, far beyond what has been usually heard or read of in eminent saints, but appear to be persons that have a spirit of meek and fervent love, charity, and compassion to mankind in general, in a far less degree than they—I say, such agonies are greatly to be suspected, for reasons already given; namely, that the Spirit of God is wont to give graces and gracious affections in a beautiful symmetry and proportion.

And as there is a monstrous disproportion in the love of some, in its exercise towards different persons, so there is in their seeming exercises of love towards the same persons. Some men show a love to others as to their outward man; they are liberal of their worldly substance, and often give to the poor; but have no love or concern for the souls of men. Others pretend a great love to men's souls, that are not compassionate and charitable towards their bodies. The making a great show of love, pity, and distress for souls, costs them nothing; but in order to show mercy to men's bodies, they must part with money out of their pockets. But a true Christian love to our brethren extends both to their souls and bodies; and is herein like the love and compassion of Jesus Christ. He showed mercy to men's souls, by labouring for them in preaching the gospel to them; and showed mercy to their bodies, in going about doing good, healing all manner of sickness and diseases among the people. We have a remarkable instance of Christ's having compassion at once both to men's souls and bodies, and showing compassion by feeding both: Mark vi. 34. "And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them,

because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things." Here was his compassion to their souls. And in the sequel we have an account of his compassion to their bodies, because they had been a long while having nothing to eat: he fed five thousand of them with five loaves and two fishes. And if the compassion of professing Christians towards others does not work in the same way, it is a sign that it is no true Christian compassion.

And, furthermore, it is a sign that affections are not of the right sort, if persons seem to be much affected with the bad qualities of their fellow Christians, as the coldness and lifelessness of other saints, but are in no proportion affected with their own defects and corruptions. A true Christian may be affected with the coldness and unsavouriness of other saints, and may mourn much over it: but, at the same time, he is not so apt to be affected with the badness of any person's heart as his own; this is most in his view; this he is most quick-sighted to discern; of this he sees most the aggravations, and is most ready to cry out. And a lesser degree of virtue will bring him to pity himself, and be concerned at his own calamities, than rightly to be affected with others' calamities. And if men have not attained to the less, we may determine they never attained to the greater.

And here I would observe, that it may be laid down as a general rule, that if persons pretend that they come to high attainments in religion, but have never yet arrived to the lesser attainments, it is a sign of a vain pretence. As if persons pretend that they have got beyond mere morality, to live a spiritual and di-

vine life, but really have not come to be so much as moral persons: or pretend to be greatly affected with the wickedness of their hearts, and are not affected with the palpable violation of God's commands in their practice, which is a lesser attainment: or if they pretend to be brought to be even willing to be damned for the glory of God, but have no forwardness to suffer a little in their estates and names, and worldly convenience, for the sake of their duty: or pretend that they are not afraid to venture their souls upon Christ, and commit their all to God, trusting to his bare word, and the faithfulness of his promises, for their eternal welfare; but, at the same time, have not confidence enough in God to dare to trust him with a little of their estates, bestowed to pious and charitable uses: I say, when it is thus with persons, their pretences are manifestly vain. He that is in a journey, and imagines he has got far beyond such a place in his road, and never yet come to it, must be mistaken; and he is not yet arrived to the top of the hill, that never yet got half way thither.

The same that has been observed of the affection of love, is also to be observed of other religious affections. Those that are true, extend, in some proportion, to the various things that are their due and proper objects; but when they are false, they are commonly strangely disproportionate. So it is with religious desires and longings: these in the saints are to those things that are spiritual and excellent in general, and that in some proportion to their excellency, importance, or necessity, or their near concern in them; but in false longings it is often far otherwise. They will strangely run, with an impa-

tient vehemence, after something of less importance, when other things of greater importance are neglected. Thus, for instance, some persons, from time to time, are attended with a vehement inclination, and unaccountably violent pressure, to declare to others what they experience, and to exhort others; when there is, at the same time, no inclination, in any measure equal to it, to other things, to which true Christianity has as great, yea, a greater tendency; as the pouring out the soul before God in secret prayer and praise to him, and more conformity to him, and living more to his glory, &c. We read in Scripture of groanings that cannot be uttered, and soul-breakings for the longing it hath, and longings, thirstings, and pantings, much more frequently to these latter things than the former.

And so as to hatred and zeal; when these are from right principles, they are against sin in general, in some proportion to the degree of sinfulness: "I hate every false way." But a false hatred and zeal against sin, is against some particular sin only. Thus some seem to be very zealous against profaneness and pride in apparel, who themselves are notorious for covetousness, closeness, and it may be backbiting, envy towards superiors, turbulency of spirit towards rulers, and rooted ill-will to them that have injured them. False zeal is against the sins of others, while men have no zeal against their own sins. But he that has true zeal exercises it chiefly against his own sins; though he shows also a proper zeal against prevailing and dangerous iniquity in others. And some pretend to have a great abhorrence of their own sins of heart, and cry out much of their inward corruption;

and yet make light of sins in practice, and seem to commit them without much restraint or remorse; though these imply sin both in heart and life.

As there is a much greater disproportion in the exercises of false affections than of true, as to different objects, so there is also as to different times. For although true Christians are not always alike; yea, there is very great difference, at different times, and the best have reason to be greatly ashamed of their unsteadiness; yet there is not that instability and inconstancy in the hearts of those who are true virgins, "that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth," which is in false-hearted professors. The righteous man is truly said to be one whose "heart is fixed, trusting in God;" and to have "his heart established with grace;" and to hold on his way: "The righteous shall hold on his way; and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." It is spoken of as a note of the hypocrisy of the Jewish church, that they were as a swift dromedary, traversing her ways.

If, therefore, persons are religious only by fits and starts, if they now and then seem to be raised up to the clouds in their affections, and then suddenly fall down again, lose all, and become quite careless and carnal, and this is their manner of carrying on religion,—if they appear greatly moved, and mightily engaged in religion, only in extraordinary seasons, in the time of a remarkable out-pouring of the Spirit, or other uncommon dispensations of Providence, or upon the real or supposed receipt of some great mercy, when they have received some extraordinary temporal mercy, or suppose that they are newly converted, or have lately

had what they call a great discovery; but quickly return to such a frame, that their hearts are chiefly upon other things, and the prevailing bent of their hearts and stream of their affections is ordinarily towards the things of this world,—when they are like the children of Israel in the wilderness, who had their affections highly raised by what God had done for them at the Red Sea, and sang his praise, and soon fell a lusting after the flesh-pots of Egypt; but then again, when they came to Mount Sinai, and saw the great manifestations God made of himself there, seemed to be greatly engaged again, and mightily forward to enter into covenant with God, saying, "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient," but then quickly made them a golden calf,—I say, when it is thus with persons, it is a sign of the unsoundness of affections.* They are like the

* Dr. Owen (on the Spirit, Book iii. Chap. ii. sect. 18.) speaking of a common work of the Spirit, says, "This work operates greatly on the affections: we have given instances, in fear, sorrow, joy, and delight, about spiritual things, that are stirred up and acted thereby: but yet it comes short, in two things, of a thorough work upon the affections themselves. For, 1st, It doth not fix them. And, 2dly, It doth not fill them. 1. It is required that our affections be fixed on heavenly and spiritual things; and true grace will effect it: 'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above.' The joys, the fears, the hopes, the sorrows, with reference unto spiritual and eternal things, which the work before mentioned doth produce, are evanid, uncertain, unstable, not only as to the degrees, but as to the very being of them. Sometimes they are as a river ready to overflow its banks; men cannot but be pouring them out on all occasions; and sometimes, as waters that fail, no drop comes from them. Sometimes they are hot, and sometimes cold; sometimes up, and sometimes down; sometimes all heaven, and sometimes all world; without equality, without stability.—But true grace fixeth the affections on spiritual things. As to the degrees of their exercise, there may be, and is in them, a great variety,

waters in the time of a shower of rain, which, during the shower, and a little after, run like a brook, and flow abundantly; but are presently quite dry; and when another shower comes, then they will flow again. Whereas a true saint is like a stream from a living spring; which though it may be greatly increased by a shower of rain, and diminished in time of drought, yet constantly runs: ("The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up," &c.) or like a tree planted by such a stream, that has a constant supply at the root, and is always green, even in time of the greatest drought: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is: for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of

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according as they may be excited, aided, assisted by grace and the means of it; or obstructed and impeded by the interposition of temptations and diversions. But the constant bent and inclination of renewed affections is unto spiritual things; as the Scripture every where testifieth, and as experience doth confirm."

"There is," says Dr. Preston, "a certain love, by fits, which God accepts not; when men come and offer to God great promises, like the waves of the sea, as big as mountains: Oh, they think they will do much for God! But their minds change; and they become as those high waves, which at last fall level with the other waters. If a man should proffer thee great kindnesses, and thou should afterwards come to him to make use of him, and he should look strangely upon thee, as if he were never acquainted with thee, how wouldst thou esteem of such love? If we are now on, now off, in our love, God will not esteem of such love."—*Discourse on the Divine Love of Christ.*

Mr. Flavel, speaking of these changeable professors, says, "These professors have more of the moon than of the sun; little light, less heat, and many changes. They deceive many, yea, they deceive themselves; but cannot deceive God. They want that ballast and establishment in themselves, that would have kept them tight and steady."—*Touchstone of Sincerity*, Chap. ii. sect. 2.

drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." Many hypocrites are like comets, that appear for a while with a mighty blaze, but are very unsteady and irregular in their motion, (and are therefore called wandering stars,) and their blaze soon disappears, and they appear but once in a great while. But the true saints are like the fixed stars, which, though they rise and set, and are often clouded, yet are steadfast in their orb, and may truly be said to shine with a constant light. Hypocritical affections are like a violent motion; like that of the air that is moved with winds. But gracious affections are more a natural motion; like the stream of a river, which, though it has many turns hither and thither, and may meet with obstacles, and run more freely and swiftly in some places than others; yet in the general, with a steady and constant course, tends the same way, until it gets to the ocean.

And as there is a strange unevenness and disproportion in false affections, at different times; so there often is in different places. Some are greatly affected, from time to time, when in company; but have nothing that bears any manner of proportion to it, in secret, in close meditation, secret prayer, and conversing with God, when alone, and separated from all the world.* A true Christian doubtless delights

* "The Lord is neglected secretly, yet honoured openly, because there is no wind in their chambers to blow their sails; and therefore there they stand still. Hence many men keep their profession, when they lose their affection. They have by the one a name to live, (and that is enough,) though their hearts be dead. And hence, so long as you love and commend them, so long they love you; but if not, they will forsake you. They were warm only by another's fire; and hence, having no principle of life within, soon grow dead. This is the water that turns a Pharisee's mill." —*Shepard's Parable*, Part. I. p. 180.

in religious fellowship, and Christian conversation, and finds much to affect his heart in it; but he also delights at times to retire from all mankind, to converse with God in solitary places. And this also has its peculiar advantages for fixing his heart, and engaging his affections. True religion disposes persons to be much alone, in solitary places, for holy meditation and prayer. So it wrought in Isaac, Gen. xxiv. 63. And which is much more, so it wrought in Jesus Christ. How often do we read of his retiring into mountains and solitary places, for holy converse with this Father! It is difficult to conceal great affections; but yet gracious affections are of a much more silent and secret nature than those that are counterfeit. So it is with the gracious sorrow of the saints. So it is with their sorrow for their own sins.* Thus the future gracious mourning of true penitents, at the beginning of the latter-day glory, is represented as being so secret, as to be hidden from the companions of their bosom: "And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart,

* "The hypocrite," says Mr. Flavel, "is not for the closet, but the synagogue, Matth. vi. 5, 6. It is not his meat and drink to retire from the clamour of the world, to enjoy God in secret."—*Touchstone of Sincerity*, Chap. vii. sect. 2.

Dr. Ames, in his Cases of Conscience, Lib. III. chap. v. speaks of it as a thing by which sincerity may be known, "that persons be obedient in the absence, as well as in the presence of lookers on; in secret, as well, yea, more than in public;" alleging Phil. ii. 12. and Matth. vi. 6.

and their wives apart." So it is with their sorrow for the sins of others. The saints' pains and travailing for the souls of sinners, is chiefly in secret places: "If ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive." So it is with gracious joys; they are hidden manna, in this respect, as well as others. The Psalmist seems to speak of his sweetest comforts, as those that were to be had in secret: "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips; when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches." Christ calls forth his spouse, away from the world, into retired places, that he may give her his sweetest love: "Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages;—there will I give thee my loves." The most eminent divine favours that the saints obtained, that we read of in Scripture, were in their retirement. The principal manifestations that God made of himself, and his covenant-mercy to Abraham, were when he was alone, apart from his numerous family; as any one will judge that carefully reads his history. Isaac received that special gift of God to him, Rebekah, who was so great a comfort to him, and by whom he obtained the promised seed, walking alone, meditating in the field. Jacob was retired for secret prayer, when Christ came to him, and he wrestled with him, and obtained the blessing. God revealed himself to Moses in the bush, when he was in a solitary place in the desert, in Mount Horeb. And afterwards, when God showed him his glory, and he

was admitted to the highest degree of communion with God that ever he enjoyed, he was alone in the same mountain, and continued there forty days and forty nights, and then came down with his face shining. God came to those great prophets Elijah and Elisha, and conversed freely with them, chiefly in their retirement. Elijah conversed alone with God at Mount Sinai, as Moses did. And when Jesus Christ had his greatest prelibation of his future glory, when he was transfigured, it was not when he was with the multitude, or with the twelve disciples, but retired into a solitary place in a mountain, with only three select disciples, charging them that they should tell no man, until he was risen from the dead. When the angel Gabriel came to the blessed virgin, and when the Holy Ghost came upon her, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her, she seems to have been alone, and to be in this manner hid from the world: her nearest and dearest earthly friend, Joseph, that had betrothed her, (though a just man,) knew nothing of the matter. And she that first partook of the joy of Christ's resurrection, was alone with Christ at the sepulchre. And when the beloved disciple was favoured with those wonderful visions of Christ, and his future dispensations towards the church and the world, he was alone, in the isle of Patmos. Not but that we have also instances of great privileges that the saints have received when with others; or that there is not much in Christian conversation, and social and public worship, tending greatly to refresh and rejoice the hearts of the saints. But this is all that I aim at by what has been said, to show, that however true grace loves Christian so-

ciety in its place, yet it in a peculiar manner delights in retirement, and secret converse with God. So that if persons appear greatly engaged in social religion, and but little with the religion of the closet, and are often highly affected when with others, and but little moved when they have none but God and Christ to converse with, it looks very darkly upon their religion.

CHAPTER XI.

*Another great and very distinguishing difference between gracious Affections and others, is, that the higher gracious Affections are raised, the more is a spiritual appetite, and longing of soul after spiritual attainments, increased. On the contrary, false Affections rest satisfied in themselves.**

THE more a true saint loves God with a gracious love, the more he desires to love him, and the more

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* "Truly there is no work of Christ that is right," says Mr. Shepard, "but it carries the soul to long for more of it."—*Parable of the Ten Virgins*, Part I. p. 136.

And again: "There is in true grace an infinite circle: a man by thirsting receives, and receiving thirsts for more. But hence the Spirit is not poured out abundantly on churches; because men shut it out, by shutting in, and contenting themselves with their common graces and gifts; Matth. vii. 29. Examine if it be not so."—*Ibid.* p. 182.

And in p. 210, he says, "This I say, True grace, as it comforts, so it never fills, but puts an edge on the appetite: more of that grace, Lord! Thus Paul, Phil. iii. 13, 14. Thus David: 'Out of my poverty I have given,' &c. 1 Chron. xxix. 3, 17, 18. It is a sure way never to be deceived in lighter strokes of the Spirit, to be thankful for any, but to be content with no measure of it. And this cuts the thread of difference, between a superficial lighter stroke of the Spirit, and that which is sound."

uneasy is he at his want of love to him; the more he hates sin, the more he desires to hate it, and laments that he has so much remaining love to it; the more he mourns for sin, the more he longs to mourn for it; the more his heart is broken, the more he desires it should be broken; the more he thirsts and longs after God and holiness, the more he longs to long, and breathe out his very soul in longings after God. The kindling and raising of gracious affections, is like kindling a flame; the higher it is raised, the more ardent it is; and the more it burns, the more vehemently does it tend and seek to burn. So that the spiritual appetite after holiness, and an increase of holy affections, is much more lively and keen in those that are eminent in holiness, than others; and more when grace and holy affections are in their most lively exercise, than at other times. It is as much the nature of one that is spiritually new-born, to thirst after growth in holiness, as it is the nature of a new-born babe, to thirst after the mother's breast, who has the sharpest appetite, when best in health: "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." The most that the saints have in this world is but a taste, a prelibation of that future glory which is their proper fulness; it is only an earnest of their future inheritance in their hearts. The most eminent saints in this state, are but children compared with their future, which is their proper state of maturity and perfection; as the apostle observes, 1 Cor. xii. 10, 11. The greatest eminency and perfection, to which the saints arrive in this world, has no tendency to satiety, or

to abate their desires after more; but, on the contrary, makes them more eager to press forwards, as is evident by the apostle's words: "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark.—Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded."

The reasons of it are, that the more persons have of holy affections, the more they have of that spiritual taste which I have spoken of elsewhere; whereby they perceive the excellency, and relish the divine sweetness of holiness. And the more grace they have, while in this state of imperfection, the more they see their imperfection and emptiness, and distance from what ought to be; and so the more do they see their need of grace; as I showed at large before, when speaking of the nature of evangelical humiliation. And besides, grace, as long as it is imperfect, is of a growing nature, and in a growing state. And we see it to be so with all living things, that while they are in a state of imperfection, and in their growing state, their nature seeks after growth; and so much the more, as they are more healthy and prosperous. Therefore the cry of every true grace, is like that cry of true faith: "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief." And the greater spiritual discoveries and affections the true Christian has, the more does he become an earnest beggar for grace, and spiritual food, that he may grow; and the more earnestly does he pursue after it, in the use of proper means and endeavours; for true and gracious longings after holiness are no idle ineffectual desires.

But here some may object and say, How is this

consistent with what all allow, that spiritual enjoyments are of a soul-satisfying nature?

I answer, its being so, will appear to be not at all inconsistent with what has been said, if it be considered in what manner spiritual enjoyments are said to be of a soul-satisfying nature. Certainly they are not so in that sense that they are of so cloying a nature, that he who has any thing of them, though but in a very imperfect degree, desires no more. But spiritual enjoyments are of a soul-satisfying nature in the following respects:—1. They in their kind and nature, are fully adapted to the nature, capacity, and need of the soul of man. So that those who find them, desire no other kind of enjoyments; they sit down fully contented with that kind of happiness which they have, desiring no change, nor inclining to wander about any more, saying, "Who will show us any good?" the soul is never cloyed, never weary; but perpetually giving up itself, with all its powers, to this happiness.—But not that those who have something of this happiness, desire no more of the same. 2. They are satisfying also in this respect, that they answer the expectation of the appetite. When the appetite is high to any thing, the expectation is consequently so. Appetite to a particular object, implies expectation in its nature. This expectation is not satisfied by worldly enjoyments; the man expected to have a great accession of happiness, but he is disappointed. But it is not so with spiritual enjoyments; they fully answer and satisfy the expectation. 3. The gratification and pleasure of spiritual enjoyments is permanent. It is not so with worldly enjoyments. They in a sense satisfy particular appetites: but the

appetite, in being satisfied, is glutted, and then the pleasure is over: and as soon as that is over, the general appetite of human nature after happiness returns; but is empty, and without any thing to satisfy it. So that the glutting of a particular appetite does but take away from, and leave empty, the general thirst of nature. 4. Spiritual good is satisfying, as there is enough in it to satisfy the soul, as to degree, if obstacles were but removed, and the enjoying faculty duly applied. There is room enough here for the soul to extend itself; here is an infinite ocean of it. If men be not satisfied here, in degree of happiness, the cause is with themselves; it is because they do not open their mouths wide enough.

But these things do not argue that a soul has no appetite excited after more of the same, that has tasted a little; or that his appetite will not increase, the more he tastes, until he comes to fulness of enjoyment: as bodies that are attracted to the globe of the earth, tend to it more strongly, the nearer they come to the attracting body, and are not at rest out of the centre. Spiritual good is of a satisfying nature; and for that very reason, the soul that tastes, and knows its nature, will thirst after a fulness of it, that it may be satisfied. And the more he experiences, and the more he knows this excellent, unparalleled, exquisite, and satisfying sweetness, the more earnestly will he hunger and thirst for more, until he comes to perfection. And therefore this is the nature of spiritual affection, that the greater they be, the greater the appetite and longing is, after grace and holiness.

But with those joys, and other religious affections, that are false and counterfeit, it is otherwise. If

before, there was a great desire, of some sort, after grace, as these affections rise, that desire ceases, or is abated. It may be before, while the man was under legal convictions, and much afraid of hell, he earnestly longed that he might obtain spiritual light in his understanding, and faith in Christ, and love to God: but now, when these false affections are risen, that deceive him, and make him confident that he is converted, and his state good, there are no more earnest longings after light and grace; for his end is answered; he is confident that his sins are forgiven him, and that he shall go to heaven: and so he is satisfied. And especially when false affections are raised very high, do they put an end to longings after grace and holiness. The man now is far from appearing to himself a poor empty creature; on the contrary, he is rich and increased with goods, and hardly conceives of any thing more excellent than that to which he has already attained.

Hence there is an end to many persons' earnestness in seeking, after they have once obtained what they call their conversion; or at least, after they have had those high affections, that make them fully confident of it. Before, while they looked upon themselves as in a state of nature, they were engaged in seeking after God and Christ, and cried earnestly for grace, and strove in the use of means: but now they act as though they thought their work was done; they live upon their first work, or some high experiences that are past; and there is an end to their crying and striving after God and grace.* Whereas

* It is usual to see a false heart most diligent in seeking the Lord, when he has been worst, and most careless when it is best.

the holy principles that actuate a true saint have a far more powerful influence to stir him up to earnest-

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Hence many at first conversion sought the Lord earnestly: afterwards affections and endeavours die; that now they are as good as the word can make them. A hypocrite's last end is to satisfy himself: hence he has enough. A saint's is to satisfy Christ: hence he never has enough."—*Shepard's Par.* Part I. p. 157.

"Many a man, it may be, may say, I have nothing in myself, and all is in Christ; and comfort himself there, and so falls asleep. Hands off: and touch not this ark, lest the Lord slay thee: a Christ of clouts would serve your turn as well."—*Ibid.* p. 72.

"A hypocrite's light goes out, and grows not. Hence many ancient standers take all their comforts from their first work, and droop when in old age."—*Ibid.* p. 77.

And p. 93, 94. Mr. Shepard, mentioning the characters of those that have a dead hope, says, "They that content themselves with any measure of holiness and grace, they look not for Christ's coming and company. For saints that look for him, though they have not that holiness and grace they would have, yet they rest not satisfied with any measure: 1 John iii. 3. 'He that hath this hope purifieth himself as he is pure.'—The saints content not themselves with any dressings, until made glorious; and so fit for fellowship with that spouse.—When a man leaves not, until he gets such a measure of faith and grace, and now when he has got this, contents himself with this, as a good sign that he shall be saved, he looks not for Christ. Or when men are heavily laden with sin; then close with Christ; and then are comforted, sealed, and have joy that fills them; and now the work is done. And when men shall not content themselves with any measure, but wish they had more, if grace would grow, while they tell clocks and sit idle; and so God must do all; but do not purge themselves and make work of it.

Again, p. 109. "There is never a hypocrite living, but closeth with Christ for his own ends: for he cannot work beyond his principle. Now, when men have served their own turns out of another man, away they go, and keep that which they have. A hypocrite closeth with Christ, as a man with a rich shop; he will not be at cost to buy all the shop, but so much as serves his turn. Commonly, men in horror, seek so much of Christ as will ease them; and hence profess, and hence seek for so much of Christ as will credit them; and hence their desires after Christ are soon satisfied. *Appetitus finis est infinitus.*"

"Woe to thee that thou canst paint such a Christ in thy head, and receive such a Christ into thy heart, as must be a pander to your sloth.—Why, what can we do? what can we do?—Why, as the first Adam conveys not only guilt but power; so the second conveys both righteousness and strength."—*Ibid.* p. 158.

"When the Lord hath given some light and affection, and

ness in seeking God and holiness, than servile fear. Hence seeking God is spoken of as one of the distinguishing characters of the saints; and those that seek God, is one of the names by which the godly are called in Scripture: "This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob." "Let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake." "The humble shall see this, and be glad; and your hearts shall live that seek God." "Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say continually, The Lord be magnified." And the Scriptures every where represent the seeking, striving, and labour of a Christian, as being chiefly after his conversion, and his conversion as being but the beginning of his work. And almost all that is said in the New Testament, of men's watching, giving earnest head to themselves, running the race that is set before them, striving and agonizing, wrestling not with flesh and blood, but principalities and powers, fighting, putting on the whole armour of God, and standing, having done all to stand, pressing forward, reaching forth, continuing instant in prayer, crying to God day and night; I say, almost all that is said in the New Testament of

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some comfort and some reformation, now a man grows full here. Saints do for God; and carnal hearts do something too; but a little fills them and quiets them, and so damns them. And hence men at the first work upon them, are very diligent in the use of means; but after that, they be brought to neglect prayer, sleep out sermons, and to be careless, sapless, lifeless."—*Ibid.* p. 210.

"It is an argument of want of grace, when a man saith to himself, as the glutton said to his soul, 'Take thy rest, for thou hast goods laid up for many years.' So thou hast repentance and grace, and peace enough for many years: and hence the soul takes its rest, grows sluggish and negligent. Oh, if you die in this case, this night thy soul shall be taken away to hell."—*Ibid.* p. 227.

these things, is spoken of, and directed to the saints. Where these things are applied to sinners seeking conversion once, they are spoken of the saints' prosecution of the great business of their high calling, ten times. But many in these days have got into a strange antiscriptural way, of having all their striving and wrestling over before they are converted; and so having an easy time of it afterwards, to sit down and enjoy their sloth and indolence; as those that now have a supply of their wants, and are become rich and full. But when the Lord "fills the hungry with good things, these rich are like to be sent away empty."

But doubtless there are some hypocrites, that have only false affections, who will think they are able to stand this trial; and will readily say, that they desire not to rest satisfied with past attainments, but to be pressing forward, they do desire more, they long after God in Christ, and desire more holiness, and do seek it. But the truth is, their desires are not properly the desires of appetite after holiness, for its own sake, or for the moral excellency and holy sweetness that is in it; but only for by-ends. They long after clearer discoveries, that they may be better satisfied about the state of their souls; or because in great discoveries self is gratified, in being made so much of by God, and so exalted above others; they long to taste the love of God, (as they call it,) more than to have more love to God. Or, it may be, they have a kind of forced, fancied, or made longings; because they think they must long for more grace, otherwise it will be a dark sign upon them. But such things as these are far different from the natural, and, as it were, necessary appetite and thirsting of

the new man after God and holiness. There is an inward burning desire that a saint has after holiness, as natural to the new creature as vital heat is to the body. There is a holy breathing and panting after the Spirit of God, to increase holiness, as natural to a holy nature as breathing is to a living body. And holiness or sanctification is more directly the object of it, than any manifestation of God's love and favour. This is the meat and drink that is the object of the spiritual appetite: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." Where we read in Scripture of the desires, longings, and thirstings of the saints, righteousness and God's laws are much more frequently mentioned, as the object of them, than any thing else. The saints desire the sincere milk of the word, not so much to testify God's love to them, as that they may grow thereby in holiness. I have shown before, that holiness is that good which is the immediate object of a spiritual taste. But undoubtedly the same sweetness that is the chief object of a spiritual taste, is also the chief object of a spiritual appetite. Grace is the godly man's treasure: "The fear of the Lord is his treasure." Godliness is the gain that he is covetous and greedy of. Hypocrites long for discoveries, more for the present comfort of the discovery, and the high manifestation of God's love in it, than for any sanctifying influence of it. But neither a longing after great discoveries, or after great tastes of the love of God, nor longing to be in heaven, nor longing to die, are in any measure so distinguishing marks of true saints, as longing after a more holy heart, and living a more holy life.

CHAPTER XII.

Gracious and holy Affections have their exercise and fruit in Christian practice. I mean, they have that influence and power upon him who is the subject of them, that they cause that a practice, which is universally conformed to, and directed by Christian rules, should be the practice and business of his life.

This implies three things:—1. That his behaviour or practice in the world, be universally conformed to, and directed by Christian rules. 2. That he makes a business of such a holy practice above all things; that it be a business in which he is chiefly engaged, and devoted to, and pursues with highest earnestness and diligence: so that he may be said to make this practice of religion eminently his work and business. And, 3. That he persists in it to the end of life: so that it may be said, not only to be his business at certain seasons, the business of Sabbath days, or certain extraordinary times, or the business of a month, or a year, or of seven years, or his business under certain circumstances; but the business of his life; it being that business which he perseveres in through all changes, and under all trials, as long as he lives.

The necessity of each of these, in all true Christians, is most clearly and fully taught in the word of God.

1. It is necessary that men should be universally

obedient:* " Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.—And ye know

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* " He that pretends to godliness, and turns aside to crooked ways, is a hypocrite: for those that are really godly, do live in a way of obedience: Ps. cxix. 1—3. ' Blessed are the undefiled in the way, that walk in the law of the Lord. They also do no iniquity.' Luke i. 6. ' They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments of the Lord blameless.' But such as live in ways of sin, are dissemblers; for all such will be rejected in the day of judgment: Matt. vii. 23. ' Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.' The like we have in Luke xiii. 27. If men live in a way of disobedience, they do not love God; for love will make men keep God's commandments: 1 John v. 3. ' Herein is love, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.' If men live in a way of disobedience, they have not a spirit of faith: for faith sanctifies men: Acts xxvi. 18. ' Sanctified by faith that is in me.' If men live in a way of disobedience, they are not Christ's sheep; for his sheep hear his voice: John x. 27. Men that live in a way of disobedience are not born of God: 1 John iii. 9. He that is born of God, sinneth not. Men that live in a way of disobedience are the servants of sin: John viii. 34. ' He that committeth sin is the servant of sin.' A course of external sin is an evidence of hypocrisy; whether it be a sin of omission or commission. If men live in the neglect of known duties, or in the practice of known evils, that will be their condemnation; let the sin be what it will; let it be profaneness, uncleanness, lying or injustice. If men allow themselves in malice, envy, wanton thoughts, profane thoughts, that will condemn them; though these corruptions do not break out in any scandalous way. These thoughts are an evidence of a rotten heart: Tit. iii. 3. ' We ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.' If a man allows himself, though he thinks he doth not, in malice and envy, he is a hypocrite; though his conscience disallows it, yet if his heart allows it, he is no saint. Some make pretences to godliness, whereby they do not only deceive others, but (which is a great deal worse) deceive themselves also: but this will condemn them, that they live in a course of sin, and so must go with ungodly men: Ps. cxxv. 5. ' As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord will lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.' If there be a great change in a man's carriage, and he be reformed in several particulars, yet if there be one evil way, the man is an ungodly man: where there is piety there is universal obedience. A man may have great infirmities, yet be a godly man. So it was with Lot, David, and Peter; but if he lives

that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.—He that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil." "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." "Ye are my friends, if ye

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in a way of sin, he does not render his godliness only suspicious, but it is full evidences against him.—Men that are godly have respect to all God's commandments: Ps. cxix. 6. There be a great many commands, and if there be one of them that a man has no respect unto, he will be put to shame another day. If a man lives in one evil way, he is not subject to God's authority; but then he lives in rebellion; and that will take off all his pleas, and at once cut off all his pretences; and he will be condemned in the day of judgment.—One way of sin is exception enough against the man's salvation. Though the sin he lives in be but small, such persons will not be guilty of perjury, stealing, drunkenness, fornication; they look upon them to be heinous things, and they are afraid of them; but they do not much matter it, if they oppress a little in a bargain, if they commend a thing too much when they are about to sell it, if they break a promise, if they spend a Sabbath unprofitably, if they neglect secret prayer, if they talk rudely and reproach others; they think these are but small things. If they can keep clear of great transgressions, they hope that God will not insist on small things. But indeed all the commands of God are established by divine authority; a small shot may kill a man, as well as a cannon-bullet; a small leak may sink a ship. If a man lives in small sins, that shows he has no love to God, no sincere care to please and honour God. Little sins are of a damning nature, as well as great; if they do not deserve so much punishment as greater, yet they do deserve damnation. There is a contempt of God in all sins: Matt. v. 19. 'He that shall break one of the least of these commands, and shall teach men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of God.' Prov. xix. 16. 'He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul; but he that despiseth his ways shall die.' If a man says, This is a great command, and so lays weight on it; and another is a little commandment, and so does not regard it, but will allow himself to break it, he is in a perishing condition."—*Stoddard's Way to know Sincerity and Hypocrisy.*

do whatsoever I command you." "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, &c. shall inherit the kingdom of God." "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Which is as much as to say, they that do any sort of wickedness. "Is not destruction to the wicked? and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity? Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps? Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity. If my step hath turned out of the way, and mine heart walked after mine eyes, and if any blot hath cleaved to my hands," &c. "If he walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity, he shall surely live."

If one member only be corrupt, and we do not cut it of, it will carry the whole body to hell. Saul was commanded to slay all God's enemies, the Amalekites; and he slew all but Agag, and the saving him alive proved his ruin. Caleb and Joshua entered into God's promised rest because they wholly followed the Lord. Naaman's hypocrisy appeared in that, however he seemed to be greatly affected with gratitude to God for healing his leprosy, and engaged to serve him; yet in one thing he desired

to be excused. And Herod, though he feared John, and observed him, and heard him gladly, and did many things; yet was condemned, in that in one thing he would not hearken to him, even in parting with his beloved Herodias. So that it is necessary that men should part with their dearest iniquities, which are as their right hand and right eyes, sins that most easily beset them, and to which they are most exposed, by their natural inclination, evil customs, or particular circumstances, as well as others. As Joseph would not make known himself to his brethren, who had sold him, until Benjamin the beloved child of the family, that was most hardly parted with, was delivered up; no more will Christ reveal his love to us, until we part with our dearest lusts, and until we are brought to comply with the most difficult duties, and those to which we have the greatest aversion.

And it is of importance to be observed, that in order to a man's being truly said to be universally obedient, his obedience must not only consist in negatives, or in universally avoiding wicked practices, consisting in sins of commission; but he must also be universal in the positives of religion. Sins of omission are as much breaches of God's commands, as sins of commission. Christ, in Matt. xxv. represents those on the left hand, as being condemned and cursed to everlasting fire, for sins of omission: "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat," &c. A man therefore cannot be said to be universally obedient, and of a Christian conversation, only because he is no thief, nor oppressor, nor fraudulent person, nor drunkard, nor tavern-haunter, nor whoremaster,

nor rioter, nor night-walker, nor unclean, nor profane in his language, nor slanderer, nor liar, nor furious, nor malicious, nor reviler: he is falsely said to be of a conversation that becomes the gospel, who goes thus far and no farther; but, in order to this, it is necessary that he should also be of a serious, religious, devout, humble, meek, forgiving, peaceful, respectful, condescending, benevolent, merciful, charitable and beneficent walk and conversation. Without such things as these, he does not obey the laws of Christ, and laws that he and his apostles did abundantly insist on, as of greatest importance and necessity.

2. In order to men's being true Christians, it is necessary that they prosecute the business of religion, and the service of God with great earnestness and diligence, as the work to which they devote themselves, and make the main business of their lives. All Christ's peculiar people, not only do good works, but are "zealous of good works." No man can do the service of two masters at once. They that are God's true servants, do give up themselves to his service, and make it, as it were, their whole work, therein employing their whole hearts, and the chief of their strength: "This one thing I do." Christians in their effectual calling, are not called to idleness, but to labour in God's vineyard, and spend their day in doing a great and laborious service. All true Christians comply with this call, (as is implied in its being an effectual call,) and do the work of Christians; which is every where in the New Testament compared to those exercises, wherein men are wont to exert their strength, with the greatest earnestness,

as running, wrestling, fighting. All true Christians are good and faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ, and "fight the good fight of faith:" for none but those who do so, do "ever lay hold on eternal life." Those who "fight as those that beat the air," never win the crown of victory. "They that run in a race, run all; but one wins the prize;" and they that are slack and negligent in their course, do not "so run, as that they may obtain." The kingdom of heaven is not to be taken but by violence. Without earnestness there is no getting along, in that narrow way that leads to life; and so not arriving at that state of glorious life and happiness to which it leads. Without earnest labour, there is no ascending the steep and high hill of Zion: and so no arriving at the heavenly city on the top of it. Without a constant laboriousness, there is no stemming the swift stream in which we swim, so as ever to come to that fountain of water of life that is at the head of it. There is need that we should watch and pray always, in order to our escaping those dreadful things that are coming on the ungodly, and our being counted worthy to stand before the Son of man. There is need of our "putting on the whole armour of God, and doing all, to stand," in order to our avoiding a total overthrow, and being utterly destroyed by the "fiery darts of the devil." There is need that we should "forget the things that are behind, and be reaching forth to the things that are before, and pressing towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus our Lord," in order to our obtaining that prize. Slothfulness in the service of God, in his professed servants, is as damning as open rebellion:

for the slothful servant, is a wicked servant, and shall be cast into outer darkness, among God's open enemies. They that are slothful, are not "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." "And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." And all they who follow that cloud of witnesses that are gone before to heaven, "do lay aside every weight, and the sin that easily besets them, and do run with patience the race that is set before them." That true faith, by which persons rely on the righteousness of Christ, and the work that he hath done for them, and do truly feed and live upon him, is evermore accompanied with such a spirit of earnestness in the Christian work and course. Which was typified of old, by the manner of the children of Israel's feeding on the paschal lamb; who were directed to eat it, as those that were in haste, with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and staff in their hand: "And thus shall ye eat it, with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand: and ye shall eat it in haste; it is the Lord's passover."

3. Every true Christian perseveres in this way of universal obedience, and diligent and earnest service of God, through all the various kinds of trials that he meets with, to the end of life. That all true saints, all those that do obtain eternal life, do thus persevere in the practice of religion, and the service of God, is a doctrine so abundantly taught in the Scripture, that particularly to rehearse all the texts

which imply it would be endless. I shall content myself with referring to some of them.*

But that in perseverance in obedience, which is chiefly insisted on in the Scripture, as a special work of the truth of grace, is the continuance of professors in the practice of their duty, and being steadfast in holy walk, through the various trials that they meet with.

By trials here, I mean those things that occur, and that a professor meets with in his course, that do especially render his continuance in his duty, and faithfulness to God, difficult to nature. These things are from time to time called in Scripture by the name of trials, or temptations, which are words of the same signification. These are of various kinds: there are many things that render persons' continuance in the way of their duty difficult, by their tendency to cherish and foment, or to stir up and provoke their lusts and corruptions. Many things make it hard to continue in the way of their duty, by their being of an alluring nature, and have a tendency to entice persons to sin; or by their tendency to take off restraints, and embolden them in iniquity. Other things are trials of the soundness and steadfastness of professors, by their tendency to make their duty ap-

* Deut. v. 29. and xxxii. 18—20. 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. Psal. lxxviii. 7, 8, 10, 11, 35, 36, 37, 41, 42, 56, &c. and cvi. 3, 12—15. and cxxv. 4, 5. Prov. xxvi. 11. Isa. lxiv. 5. Jer. xvii. 13. Ezek. iii. 20. and xviii. 24. and xxxiii. 12, 13. Matth. x. 22. and xiii. 4—8. with verses 19—23. and xxv. 8. and xxiv. 12, 13. Luke ix. 62. and xii. 35, &c. and xxii. 28. and xvii. 32. John viii. 30, 31. and xv. 6, 7, 8, 10, 16. Rom. ii. 7. and xi. 22. Col. i. 22, 23. Heb. iii. 6, 12, 14. and vi. 11, 12. and x. 35, &c. James i. 25. Rev. ii. 13, 26. and ii. 10. 1 Tim. ii. 15. 2 Tim. iv. 4—8.

pear terrible to them, and so to affright and drive them from it; such as the sufferings to which their duty will expose them; pain, ill-will, contempt and reproach, or loss of outward possessions and comforts. If persons, after they have made a profession of religion, live any considerable time in this world, which is so full of changes, and so full of evil, it cannot be otherwise, than that they should meet with many trials of their sincerity and steadfastness. And besides, it is God's manner, in his providence, to bring trials on his professing friends and servants designedly, that he may manifest them, and may exhibit sufficient matter of conviction of the state which they are in, to their own consciences, and oftentimes to the world. As appears by innumerable Scriptures.*

True saints may be guilty of some kinds and degrees of backsliding, and may be foiled by particular temptations, and may fall into sin, yea, great sins; but they can never fall away, so as to grow weary of religion and the service of God, and habitually to dislike and neglect it, either on its own account, or on account of the difficulties that attend it; as is evident by Gal. vi. 9. Rom. ii. 7. Heb. x. 36. Isa. xliii. 22. Mal. i. 13. They can never backslide, so as to continue no longer in a way of universal obedience; or so, that it shall cease to be their manner to observe all the rules of Christianity, and do all duties required, even in the most difficult circumstances.†

* Gen. xxii. 1. Exod. xv. 25. and xvi. 4. Deut. iii. 2, 15, 16. and xiii. 3. Judges ii. 22. and iii. 1, 4. Job xxiii. 10. Psal. lxvi. 10, 11. Ezek. iii. 20. Dan. xii. 10. Zech. xiii. 9. Matth. viii. 19, 20. and xviii. 21, 22. Luke i. 35. 1 Cor. xi. 19. 2 Cor. viii. 8. James i. 12. 1 Pet. iv. 12. 1 John ii. 19. Heb. xi. 17. Rev. iii. 10.

† "One way of sin is exception enough against men's salvation, though their temptations be great. Some persons delight in ini-

This is abundantly manifest by the things that have been observed already. Nor can they ever fall away, so as habitually to be more engaged in other things, than in the business of religion; or so that it should become their way and manner to serve something else more than God: or so as statedly to cease to serve God, with such earnestness and diligence, as still to be habitually devoted and given up to the business of religion; unless those words of Christ can fall to the ground, "Ye cannot serve two masters;" and

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quity; they take pleasure in rudeness and intemperate practices; but there be others that do not delight in sin; when they can handsomely avoid it, they do not choose it; except they be under some great necessity, they will not do it. They are afraid to sin; they think it is dangerous, and have some care to avoid it; but sometimes they force themselves to sin; they are reduced to difficulties and cannot tell how well to avoid sin; it is a dangerous thing not to do it. If Naaman do not bow himself in the house of Rimmon, the king will be in a rage with him, take away his office, it may be take away his life, and so he complies: 2 Kings v. 18.—So Jeroboam forced himself to set up the calves at Dan and Bethel; he thought that if the people went up to Jerusalem to worship, they would return to Rehoboam, and kill him; therefore he must think of some expedient to deliver himself in this strait: 1 Kings xii. 27, 28. He was driven by appearing necessity to take this wicked course.—So the stony-ground hearers were willing to retain the profession of the true religion: but the case was such, that they thought they could not well do it: Matth. xiii. 21. 'When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.'—So Achan and Gehazi had singular opportunities to get an estate; if they live twenty years they are not like to have such an advantage: and they force themselves to borrow a point, and break the law of God. They lay a necessity on estate, and liberty, and life, but not upon obedience. If a man be willing to serve God in ordinary cases, but excuse himself when there be great difficulties, he is not godly. It is a small matter to serve God when men have no temptation: but Lot was holy in Sodom. Noah was righteous in the old world. Temptations try men, but they do not force men to sin: and grace will establish the heart in a day of temptation. They are blessed that do endure temptation, James i. 12. but they are cursed that fall away in a day of temptation."—*Stoddard's Way to know Sincerity and Hypocrisy.*

those of the apostle, " He that will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God;" and unless a saint can change his God, and yet be a true saint. Nor can a true saint ever fall away so, that it shall come to this, that ordinarily there shall be no remarkable difference in his walk and behaviour since his conversion, from what was before. They that are truly converted, are new men, new creatures; new, not only within, but without; they are sanctified throughout, in spirit, soul, and body: old things are passed away, all things are become new; they have new hearts, and new eyes, new ears, new tongues, new hands, new feet; that is, a new conversation and practice; and they walk in newness of life, and continue to do so to the end of life. And they that fall away, and cease visibly to do so, it is a sign they never were risen with Christ.* And, especially, when men's opinion of their being converted, and so in a safe estate, is the very cause of their coming to this, it is a most evident sign of their hypocrisy.† And that,

* " Hence we learn what verdict to pass and give in concerning those men that decay and fall off from the Lord. They never had oil in the vessel; never had a dram of grace in their heart. Thus, 1 John ii. 19. ' If they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.' It seems they were such men, who were so eminent and excellent, as that there were no brands and marks upon them, to give notice to the churches that they were marked out for apostacy; but were only discovered to be unsound by their apostacy; and this was argument good enough."—*Shepard's Parable*, Part I. p. 226.

† " When a man's rising is the cause of his fall, or seals a man up in his fall, or at least the cause through his corruption. *Ex. gr.* Time was, a man lived a loose, careless, carnal life; by the ministry of some word, or reading of some book, or speaking with some friend, he comes to be convinced of his misery and woeful condition, and sees no good nor grace in himself; he hath even been hitherto deceived: at last he comes to get some light, some taste, some sorrows, some heart to use the means, some comfort

whether their falling away be into their former sins, or into some new kind of wickedness, having the corruption of nature only turned into a new channel, instead of its being mortified. As when persons that think themselves converted, though they do not return to former profaneness and lewdness; yet, from the high opinion they have of their experiences, graces, and privileges, gradually settle more and more in a self-righteous and spiritually proud temper of mind, and in such a manner of behaviour and conversation as naturally arise therefrom. When it is thus with men, however far they may seem to be from their former evil practices, this alone is enough to condemn them, and may render their last state far worse than the first. For this seems to be the very case of the Jews of that generation that Christ speaks of, Matth. xii. 43—45. who being awakened by John the Baptist's preaching, and brought to a reformation of their former licentious courses, whereby the unclean spirit was, as it were, turned out, and the house swept and garnished; yet being empty of God and of grace, became full of themselves, and were exalted in an exceeding high opinion of their own righteousness and eminent holiness, and became habituated to an answerably self-exalting behaviour; so

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and mercy, and hope of life: and when it is thus with him, now he falls; he grows full and falls; and this rising is the cause of his fall; his light is darkness and death to him; and grows to a form of knowledge; his rising makes him fall to formality, and then to profaneness; and so his tasting satisfies him, his sorrows empty his heart of sorrow for sin, and his sorrows for his falls harden his heart in his falls, and all the means of recovering him harden him.—Look as it is in diseases; if the physic and meat turns to be poison, then there is no hope of a recovery: a man is sick to death now. The saint's little measure makes him forget what is behind."—*Shepard's Parable*, Part I. p. 226.

changing the sins of publicans and harlots for those of the Pharisees; and in the issue, had seven devils, worse than the first.

Thus I have explained what exercise and fruit I mean, when I say, that gracious affections have their exercise and fruit in Christian practice.

The reason why gracious affections have such a tendency and effect, appears from many things that have already been observed, in the preceding parts of this discourse.

The reason of it appears from this, that gracious affections arise from those operations and influences which are spiritual, and that the inward principle from whence they flow, is something divine, a communication of God, a participation of the divine nature, Christ living in the heart, the Holy Spirit dwelling there, in union with the faculties of the soul, as an internal vital principle, exerting his own proper nature, in the exercise of those faculties. This is sufficient to show us why true grace should have such activity, power, and efficacy. No wonder that which is divine is powerful and effectual; for it has omnipotence on its side. If God dwells in the heart, and be vitally united to it, he will show that he is a God, by the efficacy of his operation. Christ is not in the heart of a saint, as in a sepulchre, or as a dead saviour, that does nothing; but as in his temple, and as one that is alive from the dead. For in the heart where Christ savingly is, there he lives and exerts himself after the power of that endless life that he received at his resurrection. Thus every saint that is the subject of the benefit of Christ's sufferings, is made to know and experience the power of his resur-

rection. The spirit of Christ, which is the immediate spring of grace in the heart, is all life, all power, all act:—"In demonstration of the Spirit and of power." "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost." "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." Hence saving affections, though oftentimes they do not make so great a noise and show as others; yet have in them a secret solidity, life, and strength, whereby they take hold of, and carry away the heart, leading it into a kind of captivity, gaining a full and steadfast determination of the will for God and holiness: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." And thus it is that holy affections have a governing power in the course of a man's life. A statute may look very much like a real man, and a beautiful man; yea, it may have, in its appearance to the eye, the resemblance of a very lively, strong and active man; but yet an inward principle of life and strength is wanting: and therefore it does nothing, it brings nothing to pass, there is no action or operation to answer the show. False discoveries and affections do not go deep enough to reach and govern the spring of men's actions and practice. The seed in stony ground had not the deepness of earth, and the root did not go deep enough to bring forth fruit. But gracious affections go to the very bottom of the heart, and take hold of the very inmost springs of life and activity. Herein chiefly appears the power of true godliness, namely, in its being effectual in practice. And the efficacy of godliness in this respect, is what the apostle has respect to, when he speaks of the power of godliness, 2 Tim. iii. 5. as is very plain;

for there he is particularly declaring, how some professors of religion would notoriously fail in the practice of it; and then, in the 5th verse, observes, that in being thus of an unholy practice, they deny the power of godliness, though they have the form of it. Indeed the power of godliness is exerted in the first place within the soul, in the sensible, lively exercise of gracious affections there. Yet the principle evidence of this power of godliness, is in those exercises of holy affections that are practical, and in their being practical; in conquering the will, and conquering the lusts and corruptions of men, and carrying men on in the way of holiness, through all temptation, difficulty and opposition.

Again, the reason why gracious affections have their exercise and effect in Christian practice, appears from this, (which has also been before observed,) That, "the first objective ground of gracious affections, is the transcendently excellent and amiable nature of divine things, as they are in themselves, and not any conceived relation they bear to self, or self-interest." This shows why holy affections will cause men to be holy in their practice universally. What makes men partial in religion is, that they seek themselves, and not God, in their religion, and close with religion, not for its own excellent nature, but only to serve a turn. He that closes with religion only to serve a turn, will close with no more of it than he imagines serves that turn; but he that closes with religion for its own excellent and lovely nature, closes with all that has that nature: he that embraces religion for its own sake, embraces the whole of religion. This also shows why gracious affections will cause men to

practise religion perseveringly, and at all times. Religion may alter greatly in process of time, as to its consistence with men's private interest, in many respects; and therefore he that complies with it only for selfish views, is liable, in change of times, to forsake it; but the excellent nature of religion, as it is in itself, is invariable; it is always the same at all times, and through all changes; it never alters in any respect.

The reason why gracious affections issue in holy practice, also further appears from the kind of excellency of divine things, that, it has been observed, is the foundation of all holy affections, namely, "their moral excellency, or the beauty of their holiness." No wonder that a love to holiness, for holiness' sake, inclines persons to practise holiness, and to practise every thing that is holy. Seeing holiness is the main thing that excites, draws, and governs all gracious affections, no wonder that all such affections tend to holiness. That which men love, they desire to have and to be united to, and possessed of. That beauty which men delight in, they desire to be adorned with. Those acts which men delight in, they necessarily incline to do.

And what has been observed of that divine teaching and leading of the Spirit of God, which there is in gracious affections, shows the reason of this tendency of such affections to a universally holy practice. For, as has been observed, the Spirit of God in this his divine teaching and leading, gives the soul a natural relish of the sweetness of that which is holy, and of every thing that is holy, so far as it comes in view, and excites a disrelish and disgust of every thing that is unholy.

The same also appears from what has been observed of the nature of that spiritual knowledge, which is the foundation of all holy affection, as consisting in a sense and view of that excellency in divine things, which is supreme and transcendent. For hereby these things appear above all others worthy to be chosen and adhered to. By the sight of the transcendent glory of Christ, true Christians see him worthy to be followed; and so are powerfully drawn after him; they see him worthy that they should forsake all for him: by the sight of that superlative amiableness, they are thoroughly disposed to be subject to him, and engaged to labour with earnestness and activity in his service, and made willing to go through all difficulties for his sake. And it is the discovery of this divine excellency of Christ that makes them constant to him; for it makes such a deep impression upon their minds, that they cannot forget him; and they will follow him whithersoever he goes, and it is in vain for any to endeavour to draw them away from him.

The reason of this practical tendency and issue of gracious affections, further appears from what has been observed of such affections being "attended with a thorough conviction of the judgment of the reality and certainty of divine things." No wonder that they who were never thoroughly convinced that there is any reality in the things of religion, will never be at the labour and trouble of such an earnest, universal, and persevering practice of religion, through all difficulties, self-denials, and sufferings, in a dependence on that, of which they are not convinced. But, on the other hand, they who are thoroughly convinced

of the certain truth of those things, must needs be governed by them in their practice; for the things revealed in the word of God are so great, and so infinitely more important than all other things, that it is inconsistent with the human nature, that a man should fully believe the truth of them, and not be influenced by them above all things in his practice.

Again, the reason of this expression and effect of holy affections in the practice, appears from what has been observed of "a change of nature accompanying such affections." Without a change of nature, men's practice will not be thoroughly changed. Until the tree be made good, the fruit will not be good. Men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles. The swine may be washed, and appear clean for a little while, but yet, without a change of nature, he will still wallow in the mire. Nature is a more powerful principle of action than any thing that opposes it: though it may be violently restrained for a while, it will finally overcome that which restrains it: it is like the stream of a river, it may be stopped a while with a dam, but, if nothing be done to dry the fountain, it will not be stopped always; it will have a course, either in its old channel, or a new one. Nature is a thing more constant and permanent, than any of those things that are the foundation of carnal men's reformation and righteousness.—When a natural man denies his lust, and lives a strict, religious life, and seems humble, painful, and earnest in religion, it is not natural, it is all a force against nature; as when a stone is violently thrown upwards; but that force will be gradually spent; yet nature will remain in its full strength, and so prevails again, and

the stone returns downwards. As long as corrupt nature is not mortified, but the principle left whole in a man, it is a vain thing to expect that it should not govern. But if the old nature be indeed mortified, and a new and heavenly nature infused, then may it well be expected, that men will walk in newness of life, and continue to do so to the end of their days.

The reason of this practical exercise and effect of holy affections, may also be partly seen, from what has been said of that spirit of humility which attends them. Humility is that wherein a spirit of obedience does much consist. A proud spirit is a rebellious spirit, but a humble spirit is a yieldable, subject, obediential spirit. We see among men, that the servant who is of a haughty spirit, is not apt in every thing to be submissive and obedient to the will of his master; but it is otherwise with that servant who is of a lowly spirit.

And that lamb-like, dove-like spirit, that has been spoken of, which accompanies all gracious affections, fulfils (as the apostle observes, Rom. xiii. 8—10. and Gal. v. 14.) all the duties of the second table of the law; wherein Christian practice does very much consist, wherein the external practice of Christianity chiefly consists.

And the reason why gracious affections are attended with that strict, universal, and constant obedience which has been spoken of, further appears, from what has been observed of that tenderness of spirit which accompanies the affections of true saints, causing in them so quick and lively a sense of pain,

through the presence of moral evil, and such a dread of the appearance of evil.

And one great reason why the Christian practice which flows from gracious affections, is universal, and constant, and persevering, appears from what has been observed of those affections themselves, from whence this practice flows, being universal and constant, in all kinds of holy exercises, and towards all objects, and in all circumstances, and at all seasons, in a beautiful symmetry and proportion.

And much of the reason why holy affections are expressed and manifested in such an earnertness, activity, and engagedness and perseverance in holy practice, as has been spoken of, appears from what has been observed, of the spiritual appetite and longing after further attainments in religion, which evermore attends true affection, and does not decay, but increases as those affections increase.

Thus we see how the tendency of holy affections to such a Christian practice as has been explained, appears from each of those characteristics of holy affection that have been before spoken of.

And this point may be further illustrated and confirmed, if it be considered, that the holy Scriptures do abundantly place sincerity and soundness in religon, in making a full choice of God as our only Lord and portion, forsaking all for him, and in a full determination of the will for God and Christ, on counting the cost; in our hearts closing and complying with the religion of Jesus Christ, with all that belongs to it, embracing it with all its difficulties, as it were, hating our dearest earthly enjoyments, and even our own lives, for Christ; giving up ourselves, with all

that we have, wholly and for ever, unto Christ, without keeping back any thing, or making any reserve; or, in one word, in the great duty of self-denial for Christ; or in denying, that is, as it were, disowning and renouncing ourselves for him, making ourselves nothing that he may be all. Now surely having a heart to forsake all for Christ, tends to actually forsaking all for him, as far as there is occasion, and we have the trial. A having a heart to deny ourselves for Christ, tends to a denying ourselves indeed, when Christ and self-interest stand in competition. A giving up ourselves, with all that we have, in our hearts, without making any reserve there, tends to our behaving ourselves universally as his, as subject to his will, and devoted to his ends. Our hearts entirely closing with the religion of Jesus, with all that belongs to it, and as attended with all its difficulties, upon a deliberate counting the cost, tends to a universal closing with the same in act and deed, and actually going through all the difficulties that we meet with in the way of religion, and so holding out with patience and perseverance.

The tendency of grace in the heart to holy practice is very direct, and the connection most naturally close and necessary. True grace is not an unactive thing; there is nothing in heaven or earth of a more active nature; for it is life itself, and the most active kind of life, even spiritual and divine life. It is no barren thing; there is nothing in the universe that in its nature has a greater tendency to fruit. Godliness in the heart has a direct relation to practice, as a fountain has to a stream, or as the luminous nature of the sun has to beams sent forth, or as life has to

breathing, or the beating of the pulse, or any other vital act; or as a habit or principle of action has to action; for it is the very nature and notion of grace that is a principle of holy action or practice. Regeneration, which is that work of God in which grace is infused, has a direct relation to practice; for it is the very end of it, with a view to which the whole work is wrought: all is calculated and framed, in this mighty and manifold change wrought in the soul, so as directly to tend to this end: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Yea, it is the very end of the redemption of Christ, "who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again." "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?" "And you, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreproveable in his sight." "For as much as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation." "That he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." God often speaks of holy practice, as the end of that great typical re-

demption, the redemption from Egyptain bondage; as Exod. iv. 23. "Let my son go, that he may serve me."—So chap. iv. 23. vii. 16. viii. 1, 20. ix. 1, 13. and x. 3. And this is also declared to the end of election: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." "Created unto good works, which God hath fore-ordained that we should walk in them." Holy practice is as much the end of all that God does about his saints, as fruit is the end of all the husbandman does about the growth of his field or vineyard: as the matter is often represented in Scripture.* And therefore every thing in a true Christian is calculated to reach this end. This fruit of holy practice, is what every grace, and every discovery, and every individual thing, to which belongs Christian experience, has a direct tendency.†

* Matth. iii. 10. xiii. 8, 23—30, 38. xxi. 19, 33, 34. Luke xiii. 6. John xv. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8. 1 Cor. iii. 9. Heb. vi. 7, 8. Isaiah v. 1—8. Cant. viii. 11, 12. Isaiah xxvii. 2, 3. "To profess to know how much is easy; but to bring your affections into subjection, to wrestle with lusts, to cross your wills and yourselves, upon every occasion, this is hard. The Lord looketh, that in our lives we should be serviceable to him, and useful to men. That which is within, the Lord and our brethren are never the better for it: but the outward obedience flowing thence, glorifieth God, and does good to men. The Lord will have this done. What else is the end of our planting and watering, but that the trees may be filled with sap? And what is the end of that sap, but that the trees may bring forth fruit? What careth the husbandman for leaves, and barren trees?"—*Dr. Preston on the Church's Carriage.*

† "What is the end of every grace, but to mollify the heart, and make it pliable to some command or other? Look, how many commandments, so many graces there are in virtue and

The constant and indissoluble connection that there is between a Christian principle and profession in the true saints, and the fruit of holy practice in their lives, was typified of old in the frame of the golden candlestick in the temple. It is beyond doubt that that golden candlestick, with its seven branches and seven lamps, was a type of the church of Christ. The Holy Ghost himself has been pleased to put that matter out of doubt, by representing his church by such a golden candlestick, with seven lamps, in the fourth chapter of Zechariah, and representing the seven churches of Asia by seven golden candlesticks, in the first chapter of the Revelation. That golden candlestick in the temple was every where, throughout its whole frame, made with knops and flowers, Exodus xxv.

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efficacy, although not so many several names are given them. The end of every such grace is to make us obedient: as the end of temperance is chastity, to bow the heart to these commands, "Be ye sober," &c. "not in chambering and in wantonness," &c. When the Lord commandeth us not to be angry with our brother, the end of meekness, and why the Lord infuseth it, is to keep us from unadvised rash anger. So faith, the end of it is to take Jesus Christ to make us obedient to the command of the gospel, which commands us to believe in him. So as all graces do join together but to frame and fashion the soul to obedience; then so much obedience as in your lives, so much grace in your hearts, and no more. Therefore ask your hearts, how subject you are to the Lord in your lives? It was the counsel that Francis Spira gave to them about him, saith he, 'Learn all of me to take heed of severing faith and obedience; I taught justification by faith, but neglected obedience; and therefore is this befallen me.' I have known some godly men, whose comfort on their death-beds have been not from the inward acts of their minds, which, apart considered, might be subject to misapprehensions, but from the course of obedience in their lives, issuing thence. Let Christians look to it that in all their conversation, as they stand in every relation, as scholars, tradesmen, husbands, wives, look to this, that when they come to die, they have been subject in all things. This will yield comfort."—*Dr. Preston's Church's Carriage.*

31. to the end, and chap. xxvii. 17—24. The word translated knop, in the original signifies apple or pomegranate. There was a knop and a flower, a knop and a flower: wherever there was a flower, there was an apple or pomegranate with it; the flower and the fruit were constantly connected, without fail. The flower contained the principles of the fruit, and a beautiful promising appearance of it; and it never was a deceitful appearance; the principle or show of fruit, had evermore real fruit attending it, or succeeding it. So it is in the church of Christ: there is the principle of fruit in grace in the heart; and there is an amiable profession, signified by the open flowers of the candlestick; and there is answerable fruit, in holy practice, constantly attending this principle and profession. Every branch of the golden candlestick, thus composed of golden apples and flowers, was crowned with a burning, shining lamp on the top of it. For it is by this means that the saints shine as lights in the world, by making a fair and good profession of religion, and having their profession evermore joined with answerable fruit in practice: agreeable to that of our Saviour: "Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." A fair and beautiful profession, and golden fruits accompanying one another, are the amiable ornaments of the true church of Christ. Therefore we find that apples and flowers were not only the ornaments of the candlestick in the temple, but of the temple itself, which is a type of the church; which the apostle tells.

us, " is the temple of the living God." See 1 Kings vi. 18. "And the cedar of the house within was carved with knops and open flowers." The ornaments and crown of the pillars, at the entrance of the temple, were of the same sort: they were lilies and pomegranates, or flowers and fruits mixed together, 1 Kings vii. 18, 19. So it is with all those that are as pillars in the temple of God, who shall go no more out, or never be ejected as intruders, as it is with all true saints: " Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out."

Much the same thing seems to be signified by the ornaments on the skirt of the ephod, the garment of Aaron the high-priest, which were golden bells and pomegranates. That these skirts of Aaron's garment represent the church, or the saints, (that are, as it were, the garment of Christ,) is manifest; for they are evidently so spoken of—"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments." That ephod of Aaron signified the same with the seamless coat of Christ our great High Priest. As Christ's coat had no seam, but was woven from the top, throughout, so it was with the ephod, Exod. xxix. 22. As God took care in his providence that Christ's coat should not be rent; so God took special care that the ephod should not be rent. Exod. xxviii. 32. and xxxix. 23. The golden bells on this ephod, by their precious matter and pleasant sound, do well represent the good profession that the saints make; and the pomegranates the fruit they bring forth. And

as in the hem of the ephod, bells and pomegranates were constantly connected, as is once and again observed, there was a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, Exod. xxviii. 34. and xxxix. 26. so it is in the true saints; their good profession and their good fruit, do constantly accompany one another: the fruit they bring forth in life evermore answers the pleasant sound of their profession.

Again, the very same thing is represented by Christ, in his description of his spouse—"Thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies." Here again are beautiful flowers, and good fruit, accompanying one another. The lilies were fair and beautiful flowers, and the wheat was good fruit.

As this fruit of Christian practice is evermore found in true saints, according as they have opportunity and trial, so it is found in them only; none but true Christians do live such an obedient life, so universally devoted to their duty, and given up to the business of a Christian, as has been explained. All unsanctified men are workers of iniquity; they are of their father the devil, and the lusts of their father they will do. There is no hypocrite that will go through with the business of religion, and both begin and finish the tour; they will not endure the trials God is wont to bring on the professors of religion, but will turn aside to their crooked ways: they will not be thoroughly faithful to Christ in their practice, and follow him whithersoever he goes. Whatever lengths they may go in religion in some instances, and though they may appear exceedingly strict, and mightily engaged in the service of God for a season, yet they are servants to sin; the chains

of their old task-masters are not broken; their lusts yet have a reigning power in their hearts; and therefore to these masters they will bow down again.*

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* "No unregenerate man, though he go ever so far, let him do ever so much, but he lives in some one sin or other, secret or open, little or great. Judas went far, but he was covetous; Herod went far, but he loved his Herodias. Every dog hath his kennel; every swine hath his swill; and every wicked man his lust."—*Shepard's Sincere Convert*, first edition, p. 96.

"There is never an unsound heart in the world, but as they say of witches, they have some familiar that sucks them, so they have some lust that is beloved of them, some beloved there is they have given a promise to, never to forsake."—*Shepard's Parable*, Part I. p. 15.

"No man that is married to the law, but his fig-leaves cover some nakedness. All his duties ever brood some lust. There is some one sin or other the man lives in; which either the Lord discovers, and he will not part with, as the young man; or else is so spiritual, he cannot see all his life-time. Read through the strictest of all, and see this, Matt. xxiii. Painted sepulchres. Paul, that was blameless, yet (Eph. ii. 3. Titus iii. 3.) 'served divers lusts and pleasures.' And the reason is, the law is not the ministration of the Spirit, 2 Cor. iii. 8, 9. which breaks off from every sin. There is no law that can give life, Gal. iii. 21. and hence many men have strong resolutions, and break all again. Hence men sin and sorrow, and pray again, and then go with more ease in their sin. Examine thyself: is there any living lust with thy righteousness? It is sure, it is a righteousness thou art married to, and never were yet matched to Christ."—*Ibid.* Part I. pp. 19, 20.

"No hypocrite, though he closeth with Christ, and for a time grow up in knowledge of, and communion with Christ, but he hath at that time hidden lusts and thorns that overgrow his growings, and choke all at last; and in conclusion meditates a league between Christ and his lusts, and seeks to reconcile them together."—*Ibid.* Part I. p. 109.

"Their faith is in such a party, as never was yet thoroughly rent from sin. And here is the great wound of the most cunning hypocrites living.—Let a man be cast down as low as hell with sorrow, and lie under chains, quaking, in apprehension of terror to come; let a man then be raised up to heaven in joy, not able to live; let a man reform and shine like an earthly angel; yet, if not rent from lust, that either you did never see it, or if so, you have not followed the Lord to remove it, but proud, dogged, worldly, sluggish still, false in your dealings, cunning in your tradings, devils in your families, images in your churches; you

"Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried: but the wicked will do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand." "Let favour be showed

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are objects of pity now, and shall be of terror at the great day. For where sin remains in power, it will bring faith, and Christ, and joy, into bondage and service of itself."—*Ibid.* Part I. p. 125.

"Methinks it is with the best hypocrites, as it is with divers old merchants: they prize and desire the gain of merchandize; but to be at the trouble to prepare the ship, to put themselves upon the hazards and dangers of the ship, to go and fetch the treasure that they prize, this they will never do. So, many prize and desire earnestly the treasures of heaven; but to be at the trouble of a heaven-voyage to fetch this treasure, to pass through the valley of Baca, tears, temptations, the powers of darkness, the breaches, opposition, and contradictions of a sinful unbelieving heart, good and evil report, to pass from one depth and wave to another, this and the best hypocrites fails in, and hence loses all at last. And this I conceive to be one of the great differences between the strong desires and esteems of hypocrites and saints.—Look, as it is with men that have two trades, or two shops; one is as much as ever they can follow or tend: they are forced at last to put off one, and they must neglect one: so here. That spirit of sloth and slumber, which the Lord ever leaves the best hypocrite to, so mightily oppresseth all their senses, that they cannot use effectually all means to accomplish their ends. And hence a man desires the end, but has it not: Prov. xiii. 4."—*Ibid.* Part I. pp. 150, 151.

"Read through all the Scripture; constantly, never any hypocrites but they had this brand, Matt. vii. 23. 'You workers of iniquity.'"—*Ibid.* Part I. p. 105.

"A carnal man may hit upon some good duty that God commands, and refrain from some sin that God forbids; but to go through he cannot: to take up reproach and disgrace, to lose his credit, to forsake his friends, to lose honour and riches, and pleasures; this he will not do, until he be humbled."—*Dr. Preston on Paul's Conversion.*

"So it is with men, because they want humiliation. Therefore their profession and they do not continue, but part willingly one from another.—They will do some things, but not all things: and they will forego some things, but not all things. And therefore our Saviour saith, Luke xiv. 'He that will not forsake all for my sake, is not worthy of me.' He is not worth the saving, that prizes not me above all things whatsoever. And a man will not prize Christ, nor forsake all things for Christ, until he be humbled."—*Ibid.*

to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly." "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called, The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it." "The ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein." "What is the hope of the hypocrite? Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?" An unsanctified man may hide his sin, and may in many things, and for a season, refrain from sin; but he will not be brought finally to renounce his sin, and give it a bill of divorce; sin is too dear to him, for him to be willing for that: "Wickedness is sweet in his mouth; and therefore he hides it under his tongue; he spares it, and forsakes it not, but keeps it still within his mouth." Herein chiefly consists the straitness of the gate, and the narrowness of the way that leads to life; upon the account of which carnal men will not go in thereat; namely, that it is a way of utterly denying, and finally renouncing, all ungodliness; and so a way of self-denial, or self-renunciation.

Many natural men, under the means that are used with them, and God's strivings with them to bring them to forsake their sins, do by their sins as Pharaoh did by his pride and covetousness, which he gratified, by keeping the children of Israel in bondage, when God strove with him, to bring him to let the people go. When God's hand pressed Pharaoh sore, and he was exercised with fears of God's future wrath, he entertained some thoughts of letting the people go, and promised he would do it; but from time to time he broke his promises, when he saw there was

respite. When God filled Egypt with thunder and lightning, and the fire ran along the ground, then Pharaoh is brought to confess his sin with seeming humility, and to have a great resolution to let the people go: "And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time; the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Entreat the Lord (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer." So sinners are sometimes by thunders and lightnings, and great terrors of the law, brought to a seeming work of humiliation, and to appearance to part with their sins; but are no more thoroughly brought to a disposition to dismiss them, than Pharaoh was to let the people go. Pharaoh, in the struggle that was between his conscience and his lusts, was for contriving that God might be served, and he enjoy his lusts that were gratified by the slavery of the people, too. Moses insisted that Israel's God should be served and sacrificed to. Pharaoh was willing to consent to that; but would have it done without his parting with the people: "Go," says he, "sacrifice to your God in the land." So, many sinners are for contriving to serve God, and enjoy their lusts too.—Moses objected against complying with Pharaoh's proposal, that serving God, and yet continuing in Egypt under their task-masters, did not agree together, and were inconsistent one with another. There is no serving God, and continuing slaves to such enemies of God, at the same time. After this, Pharaoh consented to let the people go, provided they would not go far away; he was not willing to

part with them finally, and therefore would have them within reach. So do many hypocrites, with respect to their sins. Afterwards Pharaoh consented to let the men go, if they would leave the women and children, Exodus x. 8—10. And then after that, when God's hand was yet harder upon him, he consented that they should go, even women and children, as well as men, provided they would leave their cattle behind; but he was not willing to let them go, and all that they had, Exod. x. 24. So it oftentimes is with sinners: they are willing to part with some of their sins, but not all; they are brought to part with the more gross acts of sin, but not to part with their lusts in lesser indulgences of them. Whereas we must part with all our sins, little and great; and all that belongs to them, men, women, children, and cattle; they must all be let go, with "their young, and with their old, with their sons, and with their daughters, with their flocks, and with their herds; there must not be a hoof left behind;" as Moses told Pharaoh with respect to the children of Israel. At last, when it came to extremity, Pharaoh consented to let the people all go, and all that they had. But he was not steadfastly of that mind; he soon repented, and pursued after them again: and the reason was, that those lusts of pride and covetousness, that were gratified by Pharaoh's dominion over the people, and the gains of their service, were never really mortified in him, but only violently restrained. And thus, he being guilty of backsliding, after his seeming compliance with God's commands, was destroyed without remedy. Thus there may be a forced parting with ways of disobedience to the

commands of God, that may seem to be universal, as to what appears for a little season; but because it is a mere force, without the mortification of the inward principle of sin, they will not persevere in it, but will return as the dog to his vomit, and so bring on themselves dreadful and remediless destruction. There were many false disciples in Christ's time, that followed him for a while; but none of them followed him to the end; but some on one occasion, and some on another, went back and walked no more with him.*

* "The counterfeit and common grace of foolish virgins, after some time of glorious perfection, will certainly go out, and be quite spent. It consumes in the using, and shining, and burning.—Men that have been most forward, decay; their gifts decay, life decays.—It is so, after some time of profession; for, at first, it rather grows than decays and withers; but afterward they have enough of it, it withers and dies.—The spirit of God comes upon many hypocrites, in abundant and plentiful measure of awakening grace; it comes upon them as it did upon Balaam, and as it is, in overflowing waters, which spread far, and grow very deep, and fill many empty places.— Though it doth come upon them so, yet it doth never rest within, so as to dwell there, to take up an eternal mansion for himself.—Hence it doth decay, by little and little, until at last it is quite gone. As ponds filled with rain-water, which comes upon them; not spring-water, that riseth up within them; it dries up, by little and little, until quite dry."—*Shepard's Parable*, Part II. p. 58, 59.

"Some men may apprehend Christ, neither out of fear of misery, nor only to preserve some sin; but God lets in light and heat of the blessed beams of the glorious gospel of the Son of God; and therefore there is mercy, rich, free, sweet, for damned, great, vile sinners. Good Lord, saith the soul, what a sweet ministry, word, God, and gospel is this! and there rests. This was the frame of the stony ground; which heard the word, and received it with joy, and for a time believed. And this is the case of thousands, that are much affected with the promise and mercy of Christ, and hang upon free grace for a time; but as it is with sweet smells in a room, they continue not long; or as flowers, they grow old and withered, and then fall. In time of temptation, lust, and world, and sloth, is more sweet than Christ and all his gospel is."—*Ibid.* Part II. p. 168.

"We shall see in experience: take the best professors living; though they may come, as they and others judged, to the Lord,

From what has been said, it is manifest, that Christian practice, or a holy life, is a great and distinguishing sign of true and saving grace. But I may go further, and assert, that it is the chief of all the signs of grace, both as an evidence of the sincerity of professors unto others, and also to their own consciences.

But then it is necessary that this be rightly taken, and that it be well understood and observed, in what sense and manner Christian practice is the greatest sign of grace. Therefore, to set this matter in a clear light, I will endeavour particularly and distinctly to prove, that Christian practice is the principal sign by which Christians are to judge, both of their own and others' sincerity of godliness; withal observing some things that are needful to be particularly noted, in order to a right understanding of this matter.

I. I shall consider Christian practice and a holy life, as a manifestation and sign of the sincerity of a professing Christian to the eye of his neighbours and brethren.

And that this is the chief sign of grace in this respect, is very evident from the word of God.—Christ, who knew best how to give us rules to judge of others, has repeated it, and inculcated it, that we should know them by their fruits: Matt. vii. 16. And then, after arguing the point, and giving clear reasons why it must needs be, that men's fruits must

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and follow the Lord, yet they will in time depart.—The Spirit never was given effectually to draw them, nor yet to keep them." —*Ibid.* Part I. p. 205.

"Never any carnal heart, but some root of bitterness did grow up at last in this soil."—*Ibid.* Part I. p. 195.

be the chief evidence of what sort they are, in the following verses he closes, by repeating the assertion, ver. 20. "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." Again, xii. 33. "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt." As much as to say, it is a very absurd thing, for any to suppose that the tree is good, and yet the fruit bad; that the tree is of one sort and the fruit of another; for the proper evidence of the nature of the tree is its fruit. Nothing else can be intended by that last clause in the verse, "For the tree is known by its fruit," than that the tree is chiefly known by its fruit, that this is the main and most proper diagnostic, by which one tree is distinguished from another. "Every tree is known by his own fruit." Christ nowhere says, Ye shall know the tree by its leaves or flowers, or ye shall know men by their talk, or ye shall know them by the good story they tell of their experiences, or ye shall know them by the manner and air of their speaking, and emphasis and pathos of expression, or by their speaking feelingly, or by making a very great show by abundance of talk, or by many tears and affectionate expressions, or by the affections ye feel in your hearts towards them; but by their fruits shall ye know them; the tree is known by its fruit; every tree is known by its own fruit. And as this is the evidence that Christ has directed us mainly to look at in others, in judging of them, so it is the evidence that Christ has mainly directed us to give to others, whereby they may judge of us: "Let your light so shine before men, that others seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in

heaven." Here Christ directs us to manifest our godliness to others. Godliness is as it were a light that shines in the soul; Christ directs that this light not only shine within, but that it would shine out before men, that they may see it. But which way shall this be? It is by our good works. Christ doth not say, that others hearing your good works, your good story, or your pathetical expressions; but "that others seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven." Doubtless, when Christ gives us a rule how to make our light shine, that others may have evidence of it, his rule is the best that is to be found. And the apostles do mention a Christian practice, as the principal ground of their esteem of persons as true Christians. As the apostle Paul in the 6th chapter of Hebrews. There the apostle, in the beginning of the chapter, speaks of them that have great common illuminations, that have "been enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, that afterwards fall away, and are like barren ground, that is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned;" and then immediately adds in the 9th verse, (expressing his charity for the Christian Hebrews, as having that saving grace, which is better than all these common illuminations,) "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." And then, in the next verse, he tells them what was the reason he had such good thoughts of them: he does not say, that it was because they had given him a good account of

a work of God upon their souls, and talked very experimentally; but it was their work, and labour of love: "For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." And the same apostle speaks of a faithful serving God in practice, as the proper proof to others of men's loving Christ above all, and preferring his honour to their private interest: "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's: but ye know the proof of him, that as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel." So the apostle John expresses the same, as the ground of his good opinion of Gaius: "For I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee." But how did the brethren testify of the truth that was in Gaius? and how did the apostle judge of the truth that was in him? It was not because they testified that he had given them a good account of the steps of his experiences, and talked like one that felt what he said, and had the very language of a Christian: but they testified, that he walked in the truth; as it follows —"Even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth. Beloved, thou dost faithfully whatsoever thou dost to the brethren, and to strangers; which have borne witness of thy charity before the church." Thus the apostle explains what the brethren had borne witness of, when they came and testified of his walking in the truth. And the apostle seems, in this same place, to give it as a rule to Gaius how he should judge of others. In verse 10. he mentions

one Diotrephes, that did not carry himself well, and led away others after him; and then, in the 11th verse, he directs Gaius to beware of such, and not to follow them; and gives him a rule whereby he may know them, exactly agreeable to that rule Christ had given before: "By their fruits ye shall know them," says the apostle.—"Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doth good is of God; but he that doth evil hath not seen God." And I would further observe, that the apostle James, expressly comparing that way of showing others our faith and Christianity by our practice or works, with other ways of showing our faith without works, or not by works, does plainly and abundantly prefer the former: "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." A manifestation of our faith without works, or in a way divers from works, is a manifestation of it in words, whereby a man professes faith. As the apostle says: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith?" Therefore here are two ways of manifesting to our neighbour what is in our hearts; one by what we say, and the other by what we do. But the apostle abundantly prefers the latter, as the best evidence. Now certainly all accounts we give of ourselves in words, our saying that we have faith, and that we are converted, and telling the manner how we came to have faith, and the steps by which it was wrought, and the discoveries and experiences that accompany it, are still but manifesting our faith by what we see; it is but showing our faith by our words, which the apostle speaks of as falling vastly

short of manifesting it, by what we do, and showing our faith by our works.

And as the Scripture plainly teaches, that practice is the best evidence of the sincerity of professing Christians; so reason teaches the same thing. Reason shows, that men's deeds are better and more faithful interpreters of their minds, than their words. The common sense of all mankind, through all ages and nations, teaches them to judge of men's hearts chiefly by their practice, in other matters: as, whether a man be a loyal subject, a true lover, a dutiful child, or a faithful servant. If a man professes a great deal of love and friendship to another, reason teaches all men, that such a profession is not so great an evidence of his being a real and hearty friend, as his appearing a friend in deeds; being faithful and constant to his friend in prosperity and adversity, ready to lay out himself, and deny himself, and suffer in his personal interest, to do him a kindness. A wise man will trust to such evidences of the sincerity of friendship, farther than a thousand earnest professions and solemn declarations, and most affectionate expressions of friendship in words. And there is equal reason, why practice should also be looked upon as the best evidence of friendship towards Christ. Reason says the same that Christ said: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." Thus, if we see a man, who in the course of his life seems to follow and imitate Christ, and greatly to exert and deny himself for the honour of Christ, and to promote his kingdom and interest in the world; reason teaches that this is an evidence of love to Christ, more to be depended on, than if a man only

says he has love to Christ, and tells of the inward experiences he has had of love to him, what strong love he felt, and how his heart was drawn out in love at such and such a time, when it may be there appears but little imitation of Christ in his behaviour, and he seems backward to do any great matter for him, or to put himself out of his way for the promoting of his kingdom, but seems to be apt to excuse himself, whenever he is called to deny himself for Christ. So if a man, in declaring his experiences, tells how he found his heart weaned from the world, and saw the vanity of it, so that all looked nothing to him, at such and such times, and professes that he gives up all to God, and calls heaven and earth to witness to it; but yet in his practice is violent in pursuing the world, and what he gets he keeps close, is exceeding loath to part with much of it to charitable and pious uses, it comes from him almost like his heart's blood. But there is another professing Christian, that says not a great deal, yet in his behaviour appears ready at all times to forsake the world, whenever it stands in the way of his duty, and is free to part with it at any time, to promote religion and the good of his fellow-creatures. Reason teaches, that the latter gives far the most credible manifestations of a heart weaned from the world. And if a man appears to walk humbly before God and men, and to be of a conversation that savours of a broken heart, appearing patient and resigned to God under affliction, and meek in his behaviour amongst men; this is a better evidence of humiliation, than if a person only tells how great a sense he had of his own unworthiness, how he was brought to lie in the dust, and was quite

emptied of himself, and see himself nothing, and all over filthy and abominable, &c. but yet acts as if he looked upon himself as one of the first and best of saints, and by just right the head of all the Christians in the town, and is assuming, self-willed, and impatient of the least contradiction or opposition; we may be assured, in such a case, that a man's practice comes from a lower place in his heart than his profession. So, (to mention no more instances,) if a professor of Christianity manifests in his behaviour a pitiful tender spirit towards others in calamity, ready to bear their burdens with them, willing to spend his substance for them, and to suffer many inconveniences in his worldly interest, to promote the good of others' souls and bodies; is not this a more credible manifestation of a spirit of love to men, than only a man's telling what love he felt to others at certain times, how he pitied their souls, how his soul was in travail for them, and how he felt a hearty love and pity to his enemies; when in his behaviour he seems to be of a very selfish spirit, close and niggardly, all for himself, and none for his neighbours, and perhaps envious and contentious? Persons in a pang of affection, may think they have a willingness of heart for great things, to do much and to suffer much, and so may profess it very earnestly and confidently, when really their hearts are far from it. Thus many, in their affectionate pangs, have thought themselves willing to be damned eternally for the glory of God. Passing affections easily produce words; and words are cheap; and godliness is more easily feigned in words than in actions. Christian practice is a costly laborious thing. The self-denial that is required of Christians, and the

narrowness of the way that leads to life, does not consist in words, but in practice. Hypocrites may much more easily be brought to talk like saints, than to act like saints.

Thus it is plain, that Christian practice is the best sign of a manifestation of the true godliness of a professing Christian to the eye of his neighbours.

But then the following things should be well observed, that this matter may be rightly understood.

1. It must be observed, that when the Scripture speaks of Christian practice, as the best evidence to others, of sincerity and truth of grace, a profession of Christianity is not excluded, but supposed. The rules mentioned, were rules given to the followers of Christ, to guide them in their thoughts of professing Christians, and those that offered themselves as some of their society, whereby they might judge of the truth of their pretences, and the sincerity of the profession they made; and not for the trial of heathens, or those that made no pretence to Christianity, and with which Christians had nothing to do. This is as plain as is possible in that great rule which Christ gives in the 7th chapter of Matthew, "By their fruits ye shall know them." He there gives a rule how to judge of those that professed to be Christians, yea, that made a very high profession, false prophets, "who came in sheep's clothing." So it is also with that of the apostle James: "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." It is evident, that both these sorts of persons, offering to give up these diverse evidences of their faith, are professors of faith: this is implied in their offering each of them to give evidences of

the faith they professed. And it is evident by the preceding verses, that the apostle is speaking of professors of the faith in Jesus Christ. So it is very plain, that the apostle John, in those passages that have been observed in his third epistle, is speaking of professing Christians. Though, in these rules, the Christian practice of professors be spoken of as the greatest and most distinguishing sign of their sincerity in their profession, much more evidential than their profession itself; yet a profession of Christianity is plainly presupposed: it is not the main thing in the evidence, nor any thing distinguishing in it; yet it is a thing requisite and necessary in it. As the having an animal body, is not any thing distinguishing of a man from other creatures, and is not the main thing in the evidence of human nature, yet it is a thing requisite and necessary in the evidence. So that if any man should say plainly that he was not a Christian, and did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God, or a person sent of God; these rules of Christ and his apostles do not at all oblige us to look upon him as a sincere Christian, let his visible practice and virtues be what they will. And not only do these rules take no place with respect to a man that explicitly denies Christianity, and is a professed Deist, Jew, Heathen, or open Infidel; but also with respect to a man that only forbears to make a profession of Christianity; because these rules were given us only to judge of professing Christians; fruits must be joined with open flowers; bells and pomegranates go together.

But hear will naturally arise this inquiry, namely, When a man may be said to profess Christianity, or

what profession may properly be called a profession of Christianity?

I answer in two things.

(1.) In order to a man's being properly said to make a profession of Christianity, there must undoubtedly be a profession of all that is necessary to his being a Christian, or of so much as belongs to the essence of Christianity.—Whatsoever is essential in Christianity itself, the profession of that is essential in the profession of Christianity. The profession must be of the thing professed. For a man to profess Christianity, is for him to declare that he has it. And therefore, so much as belongs to a thing, so as to be necessary in order to its being truly denominated that thing; so much is essential to the declaration of that thing, in order to its being truly denominated a declaration of that thing. If we take only a part of Christianity, and leave out a part that is essential to it, what we take is not Christianity: because something that is of the essence of it is wanting. So, if we profess only a part, and leave out a part that is essential, that which we profess is not Christianity. Thus, in order to a profession of Christianity, we must profess that we believe that Jesus is the Messiah; for this reason, because such a belief is essential to Christianity. And so we must profess, either expressly or implicitly, that Jesus satisfied for our sins, and other essential doctrines of the gospel, because a belief of these things also is essential to Christianity. But there are other things as essential to religion as an orthodox belief; which it is therefore as necessary that we should profess, in order to our being truly said to profess Christianity.—Thus it is essential to

Christianity that we repent of our sins, that we be convinced of our own sinfulness, and that we are sensible we have justly exposed ourselves to God's wrath, and that our hearts do renounce all sin, and that we do with our whole hearts embrace Christ as our only Saviour; and that we love him above all, and are willing for his sake to forsake all, and that we do give up ourselves to be entirely and for ever his, &c. Such things as these do as much belong to the essence of Christianity, as the belief of any of the doctrines of the gospel; and, therefore, the profession of them does as much belong to a Christian profession. Not that in order to a being professing Christians, it is necessary that there should be an explicit profession of every individual thing that belongs to Christian grace or virtue: but certainly there must be a profession, either express or implicit, of what is of the essence of religion. And as to those things that Christians should express in their profession, we ought to be guided by the precepts of God's words, or by the Scripture examples of public professions of religion God's people have made from time to time. Thus they ought to profess their repentance of sin: as of old, when persons were initiated as professors, they came confessing their sins, manifesting their humiliation for sin. And the baptism they were baptized with, was called "the baptism of repentance." And John, when he had baptized them, exhorted them to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance," that is, agreeable to that repentance which they had professed; encouraging them, that if they do so, they should escape the wrath to come, and be gathered as wheat into God's garner. So the apostle Peter says to the

Jews, "Repent, and be baptized;" which shows, that repentance is a qualification that must be visible in order to baptism; and therefore ought to be publicly professed.—So when the Jews that returned from captivity, entered publicly into covenant, it was with confession, or public confession of repentance of their sins. This profession of repentance should include or imply a profession of conviction, that God would be just in our damnation; see Neh. ix. 33. together with ver. 35. and the beginning of the next chapter. They should profess their faith in Jesus Christ, and that they embrace Christ, and rely upon him as their Saviour, with their whole hearts, and that they do joyfully entertain the gospel of Christ. Thus Philip, in order to baptizing the eunuch, required that he should profess that he believed with all his heart: and they that were received as visible Christians, at that great out-pouring of the Spirit, which began at the day of Pentecost, appeared gladly to receive the gospel: "Then they that gladly received the word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." They should profess that they rely on Christ's rightousness and strength only, and that they are devoted to him, as their only Lord and Saviour, and that they rejoice in him as their only righteousness and portion. It is foretold, that all nations shall be brought publicly to make this profession: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have

I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come, and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." They should profess to give up themselves entirely to Christ, and to God through him; as the children of Israel, when they publicly recognized their covenant with God: "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice." They ought to profess a willingness of heart to embrace religion with all its difficulties, and to walk in a way of obedience to God universally and perseveringly.* They ought to profess, that all their hearts and souls are in these engagements to be the Lord's, and for ever to serve him.† God's people swearing to God, and swearing by his name, or to his name, as it might be rendered, (by which seems to be signified their solemnly giving up themselves to him in covenant, and vowing to receive him as their God, and to be entirely his, to obey and serve him,) is spoken of as a duty to be performed by all God's visible Israel.‡ Therefore, in order to persons being entitled to full esteem and charity with their neighbours, as being sincere professors of Christianity, by those forementioned rules of Christ and his apostles, there must be a visibly holy life, with a profession, either expressing, or plainly implying such things as those which

* Exod. xix. 8. xxiv. 3, 7. Deut. xxvi. 16—18. 2 Kings xxiii. 3. Neh. x. 28, 29. Psal. cxix. 57, 106.

† 2 Chron. xv. 12—14.

‡ Deut. vi. 13. x. 20. Psal. lxiii. 11. Isa. xix. 18. xlv. 23, 24. compared with Rom. xiv. 11. and Phil. ii. 10, 11. Isa. xlviii. 1, 2. lxv. 15, 16. Jer. iv. 2. and v. 7. xii. 16. Hosea iv. 15. and x. 4.

have been now mentioned. We are to know them by their fruits, that is, we are by their fruits to know whether they be what they profess to be; not that we are to know by their fruits, that they have something in them they do not so much as pretend to.

(2.) That profession of these things, which is properly called a Christian profession, and which must be joined with Christian practice, in order to persons being entitled to the benefit of those rules, must be made (as to what appears) understandingly: that is, they must be persons that appear to have been so far instructed in the principles of religion, as to be in an ordinary capacity to understand the proper import of what is expressed in their profession. For sounds are no significations or declarations of any thing, any further than men understand the meaning of their own sounds.

But in order to persons making a proper profession of Christianity, such as the Scripture directs to, and such as the followers of Christ should require, in order to the acceptance of the professors with full charity, as of their society; it is not necessary they should give an account of the particular steps and method, by which the Holy Spirit, sensibly to them, wrought and brought about those great essential things of Christianity in their hearts. There is no footstep in the Scripture of any such way of the apostles, or primitive ministers and Christians, requiring any such relation, in order to their receiving and treating others, as their Christian brethren, to all intents and purposes, or of their first examining them concerning the particular method and order of their experiences. They require of them a profession of

the things wrought; but no account of the manner of working was required of them. Nor is there the least shadow in the Scripture of any such custom in the church of God, from Adam to the death of the apostle John.

I am far from saying, that it is not requisite that persons should give any sort of account of their experiences to their brethren. For persons to profess those things wherein the essence of Christianity lies, is the same thing as to profess that they experience those things. Thus, for persons solemnly to profess, that, in a sense and full conviction of their own utter sinfulness, misery, and impotence, and totally undone state in themselves, and their just desert of God's utter rejection and eternal wrath, without mercy, and the utter insufficiency of their own righteousness, or any thing in them, to satisfy divine justice, or recommend them to God's favour, they do only and entirely depend on the Lord Jesus Christ, and his satisfaction and righteousness; that they do with all their hearts believe the truth of the gospel of Christ; and that in a full conviction and sense of his sufficiency and perfect excellency as a Saviour, as exhibited in the gospel, they do with their whole souls cleave to him, and acquiesce in him, as the refuge and rest of their souls, and fountain of their comfort; that they repent of their sins, and utterly renounce all sin, and give up themselves wholly to Christ, willingly subjecting themselves to him as their King; that they give him their hearts, and their whole man; and are willing and resolved to have God for their whole and everlasting portion; and in a dependence on his promises of a future and eternal enjoyment of

him in heaven, to renounce all the enjoyments of this vain world, selling all for this great treasure and future inheritance, and to comply with every command of God, even the most difficult and self-denying, and devote their whole lives to God's service; and that in forgiveness of those who have injured them, and a general benevolence to mankind, their hearts are united to the people of Jesus Christ as their people, to cleave to them, and love them as their brethren, and worship and serve God, and follow Christ in union and fellowship with them, being willing and resolved to perform all those duties that belong to them, as members of the same family of God, and mystical body of Christ: I say, for persons solemnly to profess such things as these, as in the presence of God, is the same thing as to profess that they are conscious to, or do experience such things in their hearts.

Nor is it what I suppose, that persons giving an account of their experience of particular exercises of grace, with the times and circumstances, gives no advantage to others in forming a judgment of their state; or that persons may not fitly be inquired of concerning these in some cases, especially cases of great importance, where all possible satisfaction concerning persons' piety is especially to be desired and sought after, as in the case of ordination or approbation of a minister. It may give advantage in forming a judgment, in several respects; and among others, in this, that hereby we may be better satisfied, that the professor speaks honestly and understandingly, in what he professes; and that he does not make the profession in mere formality. In order to

a profession of Christianity being accepted to any purpose, there ought to be good reason, from the circumstances of the profession, to think, that the professor does not make such a profession, out of a mere customary compliance with a prescribed form; using words without any distinct meaning, or in a very lax and ambiguous manner, as confessions of faith are often subscribed; but that the professor understandingly and honestly signifies what he is conscious of in his own heart; otherwise the profession can be of no significance, and no more to be regarded than the sound of things without life. But indeed, (whatever advantage an account of particular exercises may give in judging of this,) it must be owned, that the professor having been previously thoroughly instructed by his teachers, and giving good proof of his sufficient knowledge, together with a practice agreeable to his profession, is the best evidence of this.

Nor do I suppose, but that, if a person that is inquired of about particular passages, times, and circumstances, of his Christian experience, among other things, seems to be able to give a distinct account of the manner of his first conversion, in such a method as has been frequently observable in true conversion, so that things seem sensibly and distinctly to follow one another, in the order of time, according to the order of nature; it is an illustrating circumstance, that, among other things, adds lustre to the evidence he gives his brethren of the truth of his experiences.

But the thing that I speak of as unscriptural, is the insisting on a particular account of the distinct method and steps wherein the Spirit of God did sen-

sibly proceed, in first bringing the soul into a state of salvation, as a thing requisite in order to receiving a professor into full charity as a real Christian; or so, as for the want of such relation, to disregard other things in the evidence persons give to their neighbours of their Christianity, that are vastly more important and essential.

2. That we may rightly understand how Christian practice is the greatest evidence that others can have of the sincerity of a professing Christian, it is needful that what was said before, showing what Christian practice is, should be borne in mind, and that it should be considered how far this may be visible to others. Merely that a professor of Christianity is what is commonly called an honest man, and a moral man, (that is, we have no special transgression or iniquity to charge him with, that might bring a blot on his character,) is no great evidence of the sincerity of his profession. This is not making his light shine before men. This is not that "work and labour of love shown towards Christ's name," which gave the apostle such persuasion of the sincerity of the professing Hebrews. It may be so, that we may see nothing in a man, but that he may be a good man; there may appear nothing in his life and conversation inconsistent with his being godly, and yet neither may there be any great positive evidence that he is so. But there may be great positive appearances of holiness in men's visible behaviour: their life may appear to be a life of the service of God; they may appear to follow the example of Jesus Christ, and come up in a great measure to those excellent rules in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew, and twelfth

of Romans, and many other parts of the New Testament; there may be a great appearance of their being universal in their obedience to Christ's commands, and the rules of the gospel. They may appear to be universal in the performance of the duties of the first table, manifesting the fear and love of God; and also universal in fulfilling rules of love to men, love to saints, and love to enemies; rules of meekness and forgiveness, rules of mercy and charity, and looking not only at our own things, but also at the things of others; rules of doing good to men's souls and bodies, to particular persons, and to the public; rules of temperance and mortification, and of an humble conversation; rules of bridling the tongue, and improving it to glorify God, and bless men, showing that in their tongues is the law of kindness. They may appear to walk as Christians, in all places, and at all seasons, in the house of God, and in their families, and among their neighbours, on Sabbath days, and every day, in business and in conversation, towards friends and enemies, towards superiors, inferiors, and equals. Persons, in their visible walk, may appear to be very earnestly engaged in the service of God and mankind, much to labour and lay out themselves in this work of a Christian, and to be very constant and steadfast in it, under all circumstances and temptations. There may be great manifestations of a spirit to deny themselves, and suffer for God and Christ, and the interest of religion, and the benefit of their brethren. There may be great appearances, in a man's walk, of a disposition to forsake any thing rather than to forsake Christ, and to make every thing give place to his honour. There m aybe great manifestations, in a

man's behaviour, of such religion as this being his element, and of his placing the delight and happiness of his life in it; and his conversation may be such, that he may carry with him a sweet odour of Christian graces, and heavenly dispositions, wherever he goes. And when it is thus in the professors of Christianity, here is an evidence to others of their sincerity in their profession, to which all other manifestations are not worthy to be compared.

There is, doubtless, a great variety in the degrees of evidence that professors exhibit of their sincerity, in their life and practice; as there is a variety in the fairness and clearness of accounts persons give of the manner and method of their experiences: but, undoubtedly, such a manifestation as has been described, of a Christian spirit in practice, is vastly beyond the fairest and brightest story of particular steps and passages of experience that ever was told. And, in general, a manifestation of the sincerity of a Christian profession in practice, is far better than a relation of experiences. But yet,

3. It must be noted, agreeably to what was formerly observed, that no external manifestations and outward appearances whatsoever, that are visible to the world, are infallible evidences of grace. These manifestations that have been mentioned are the best that mankind can have; and they are such as do oblige Christians entirely to embrace professors as saints, and love them, and rejoice in them, as the children of God, and are sufficient to give them as great satisfaction concerning them, as ever is needful to guide them in their conduct, or for any intent and purpose that needs to be answered in this world.

But nothing that appears to them in their neighbour, can be sufficient to beget an absolute certainty concerning the state of his soul: for they see not his heart, nor can they see all his external behaviour; for much of it is in secret, and hid from the eye of the world; and it is impossible certainly to determine, how far a man may go in many external appearances and imitations of grace, from other principles. Though, undoubtedly, if others could see so much of what belongs to men's practice, as their own consciences may see of it, it might be an infallible evidence of their state; as will appear from what follows.

Having thus considered Christian practice as the best evidence of the sincerity of professors to others, I now proceed,

II. To observe, that the Scripture also speaks of Christian practice as a distinguishing and sure evidence of grace of persons' own consciences. This is very plain in 1 John ii. 3. "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." And the testimony of our consciences, with respect to our good deeds, is spoken of as that which may give us assurance of our own godliness: "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed, and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." And the apostle Paul speaks of the work and labour of love of the Christian Hebrews, as that which both gave him a persuasion that they had something above the highest common illuminations, and also as that evidence which tended to give them the highest assurance of hope concerning themselves: "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accom-

pany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to his saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end." So the apostle directs the Galatians to examine their behaviour or practice, that they might have rejoicing in themselves in their own happy state: "Let every man prove his own work, so shall he have rejoicing in himself, and not in another." And the Psalmist says, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments:" that is, then I shall be bold, and assured, and steadfast in my hope. And in that of our Saviour—"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." Though Christ gives this, first, as a rule by which we should judge of others, yet, in the words that next follow, he plainly shows, that he intends it also as a rule by which we should judge ourselves: "Not every one who saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, &c. And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.—And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand." I shall have occa-

sion to mention other texts, that show the same thing, hereafter.

But for the greater clearness in this matter, I would, first, show how Christian practice, doing good works, or keeping Christ's commandments, is to be taken, when the Scripture represents it as a sure sign to our own consciences that we are real Christians. And, secondly, will prove, that this is the chief of all evidences that men can have of their own sincere godliness.

1. I would show how Christian practice, or keeping Christ's commandments, is to be taken, when the Scripture represents it as a sure evidence to our own consciences, that we are sincere Christians.

And here I would observe, that we cannot reasonably suppose, that when the Scripture, in this case, speaks of good works, good fruit, and keeping Christ's commandments, that it has respect merely to what is external, or the motion and action of the body, without including any thing else; having no respect to any aim or intention of the agent, or any act of his understanding or will. For, consider men's actions so, and they are no more good works, or acts of obedience, than the regular motions of a clock; nor are they considered as the actions of the men, or any human actions at all. The actions of the body, taken thus, are neither acts of obedience nor disobedience, any more than the motions of the body in a convulsion. But the obedience and fruit, that is spoken of, is the obedience and fruit of the man; and, therefore, not only the acts of the body, but the obedience of the soul, consisting in the acts and practice of the soul. Not that I suppose, that when the

Scripture speaks, in this case, of gracious works, and fruit, and practice, that in these expressions is included all inward piety and holiness of heart, both principle and exercise, both spirit and practice: because then, in these things being given as signs of a gracious principle in the heart, the same thing would be given as a sign of itself, and there would be no distinction between root and fruit. But only the gracious exercise and holy act of the soul is meant, and given as the sign of the holy principle and good estate. Neither is every kind of inward exercise of grace meant; but the practical exercise, that exercise of the soul, and exertion of inward holiness, which there is in an obediential act; or that exertion of the mind, and act of grace, which issues and terminates in what they call the imperate acts of the will; in which something is directed and commanded by the soul to be done, and brought to pass in practice.

Here, for a clearer understanding, I would observe, that there are two kinds of exercise of grace, 1. There are those that some call *immanent* acts: that is, those exercises of grace that remain within the soul, that begin and are terminated there, without any immediate relation to any thing to be done outwardly, or to be brought to pass in practice. Such are the exercises of grace which the saints often have in contemplation; when the exercise that is in the heart does not directly proceed to, or terminate in, any thing beyond the thoughts of the mind, however they may tend to practice (as all other exercises of grace do) more remotely. 2. There is another kind of acts of grace, that are more strictly called *practical*, or effective exercises, because they immediately re-

spect something to be done. They are the exertions of grace in the commanding acts of the will, directing the outward actions. As when a saint gives a cup of cold water to a disciple, in and from the exercise of the grace of charity; or voluntarily endures persecution in the way of his duty, immediately from the exercise of a supreme love to Christ. Here is the exertion of grace producing its effect in outward actions. These exercises of grace are practical, and productive of good works, not only in this sense, that they are of a productive nature, (for so are all exercises of true grace,) but they are the producing acts. This is properly the exercise of grace in the act of the will; and this is properly the practice of the soul. And the soul is the immediate actor of no other practice but this: the motions of the body follow from the laws of union between the soul and body, which God, and not the soul, has fixed, and does maintain. The act of the soul, and the exercise of grace, that is exerted in the performance of a good work, is the good work itself, so far as the soul is concerned in it, or so far as it is the soul's good work. The determinations of the will are indeed our very actions, so far as they are properly ours, as Dr. Doddridge observes.* In this practice of the soul is included the aim and intention of the soul, which is the agent. For not only should we not look on the motions of a statue, doing justice or distributing alms by clock-work, as any acts of obedience to Christ in that statue, but neither would any body call the voluntary actions of a man, externally and materially agreeable to a com-

* Scripture Doctrine of Salvation, Sermon I. p. 11.

mand of Christ, by the name of obedience to Christ, if he had never heard of Christ, or any of his commands, or had no thought of his commands in what he did. If the acts of obedience and good fruits, spoken of, be looked upon, not as mere motions of the body, but as acts of the soul, the whole exercise of the spirit of the mind, in the action, must be taken in, with the end acted for, and the respect the soul then has to God, &c. otherwise they are no acts of denial of ourselves, or obedience to God, or service done to him, but something else. Such effective exercises of grace, as these that I have now described, many of the martyrs have experienced in a high degree. And all true saints live a life of such acts of grace as these; as they all live a life of gracious works, of which these operative exertions of grace are the life and soul. And this is the obedience and fruit that God mainly looks at, as he looks at the soul more than the body; as much as the soul, in the constitution of the human nature, is the superior part. As God looks at the obedience and practice of the man, he looks at the practice of the soul; for the soul is the man in God's sight: "For the Lord seeth not as man seeth, for he looketh on the heart."

And thus it is, that obedience, good works, good fruits, are to be taken, when given, in Scripture, as a sure evidence to our own consciences of a true principle of grace; even as including the obedience and practice of the soul, as preceding and governing the actions of the body. When practice is given, in Scripture, as the main evidence of our true Christianity to others, then is meant that in our practice which is visible to them, even our outward actions;

but when practice is given as a sure evidence of our real Christianity to our own consciences, then is meant that in our practice which is visible to our own consciences; which is not only the motion of our bodies, but the exertion and exercise of the soul, which directs and commands that motion; which is more directly and immediately under the view of our own consciences, than the act of the body. And that this is the intent of the Scripture, not only does the nature and reason of the thing show, but it is plain by the Scripture itself. Thus it is evident, that when Christ, at the conclusion of his sermon on the mount, speaks of doing or practising those sayings of his, as the grand sign of professors being true disciples—without which, he likens them to a man that built his house upon the sand, and with which, to a man that built his house upon a rock—he has a respect, not only to the outward behaviour, but to the inward exercise of the mind in that behaviour: as is evident, by observing what those preceding sayings of his are that he refers to, when he speaks of our doing or practising them; and we shall find they are such as these: "Blessed are the poor in spirit—blessed are they that mourn—blessed are the meek—blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness—blessed are the merciful—blessed are the pure in heart—whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, &c.—whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, &c.—love your enemies—take no thought for your life,"—and others of the like nature, which imply inward exercises: and when Christ says, John xiv. 21. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me," he has evidently

a special respect to that command several times repeated in the same discourse, (which he calls, by way of eminence, his commandment,) that they should love one another, as he had loved them; see John xiii. 34, 35. and xv. 10, 12, 13, 14. But this command respects chiefly an exercise of the mind or heart, though exerted in practice. So when the apostle John says, 1. John ii. 3. "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments," he has plainly a principal respect to the same command, as appears by what follows, verses 7—11. and 2 John 5, 6.; and when we are told, in Scripture, that men shall at the last day be judged according to their works, and all shall receive according to the things done in the body, it is not to be understood only of outward acts; for if so, why is God so often spoken of as searching the hearts and trying the reins, that he may render to every one according to his works? "And all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one according to his works." "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." But if, by *his ways*, and the *fruit of his doings*, is meant only the actions of his body, what need of searching the heart and reins in order to know them? Hezekiah, in his sickness, pleads his practice, as an evidence of his title to God's favour, as including, not only his outward actions, but what was in his heart—"Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart."

Though, in this great evidence of sincerity that

the Scripture gives us, what is inward is of greatest importance, yet what is outward is included and intended, as connected with the practical exertion of grace in the will, directing and commanding the actions of the body. And hereby are effectually cut off all pretensions that any man can have to evidences of godliness, who externally lives wickedly; because the great evidence lies in that inward exercise and practice of the soul, which consists in the act of the will commanding outward acts. But it is known, that these commanding acts of the will are not one way, and the actions of the bodily organs another; for the unalterable law of nature is, that they should be united, as long as soul and body are united, and the organs are not so destroyed as to be incapable of those motions that the soul commands. Thus, it would be ridiculous for a man to plead, that the commanding act of his will was to go to the public worship, while his feet carry him to a tavern or a brothel-house; or that the commanding act of his will was to give such a piece of money he had in his hand to a poor beggar, while his hand at the same instant kept it back, and held it fast.

2. I proceed to show, that Christian practice, taken in the sense that has been explained, is the chief of all the evidences of a saving sincerity in religion, to the consciences of the professors of it; much to be preferred to the method of the first convictions, enlightenings, and comforts in conversion, or any *immanent* discoveries or exercises of grace whatever, that begin and end in contemplation.*

* "Look upon John, Christ's beloved disciple and bosom companion; he had received the anointing to know him that is true,

The evidence of this appears by the following arguments.

Argument I. Reason plainly shows, that those things which put it to the proof what men will actually cleave to and prefer in their practice, when left to follow their own choice and inclinations, are the proper trial what they really prefer in their hearts. Sincerity in religion, as has been already observed, consists in setting God highest in the heart, in choosing him before other things, in having a heart to sell all for Christ, &c.—But a man's actions are the proper

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and he knew that he knew him, 1 John ii. 3. But how did he know that? He might be deceived; (as it is strange to see what a melancholy fancy will do, and the effects of it; as honest men are reputed to have weak brains, and never saw the depths of the secrets of God); what is his last proof? "Because we keep his commandments.'"—*Shepard's Parable*, Part I. p. 131.

"A man may know his present union to the Lord Jesus, by a work: 1 John ii. 4. 'He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar.'—Yes; that is true negatively: but may a man, ought a man, to see or know his union positively by this? Answer, verse 5. Many said they did know and love the Lord; but he that keeps his words—O they are sweet! It is heaven to cleave to him in every command; it is death to depart from any command; hereby know we that we are in him. If it were possible to ask of angels how they know they are not devils, they would answer, The Lord's will is ours."—*Ibid.* p. 134.

"If the question be, Whom doth the Lord Jesus love? you need not go to heaven for it, the word is nigh thee, Those that love Christ. Who are those? Those that keep his commandments."—*Ibid.* p. 138.

"Will you have Christ sit in heaven, and not look that he subdue your lusts by the work of his grace, and so sway your hearts? You despise his kingdom then. Do you seek for pardon in the blood of Christ, and never look for the virtue and end of that blood to wash you, and make you without spot, &c. You despise his priesthood and blood then. Do you look for Christ to do work for you, and you not do Christ's work, and bring forth fruit to him? You despise his honour then, John xv. 8. If I were to discover a hypocrite, or a false heart, this I would say, It is he that shall set up Christ, but loathe his works."—*Ibid.* p. 140.

trial what a man's heart prefers. As, for instance, when it is so that God and other things come to stand in competition, God is, as it were, set before a man on one hand, and his worldly interest or pleasure on the other, (as it often is so in the course of a man's life,) his behaviour in such case, in actually cleaving to the one and forsaking the other, is the proper trial which he prefers. Sincerity consists in forsaking all for Christ in heart; but to forsake all for Christ in heart, is the very same thing as to have a heart to forsake all for Christ: but certainly the proper trial whether a man has a heart to forsake all for Christ, is his being actually put to it, the having Christ and other things coming in competition, that he must actually or practically cleave to one and forsake the other. To forsake all for Christ in heart, is the same thing as to have a heart to forsake all for Christ when called to it: but the highest proof to ourselves and others, that we have a heart to forsake all for Christ when called to it, is actually doing it when called to it, or so far as called to it. To follow Christ in heart, is to have a heart to follow him. To deny ourselves in heart for Christ, is the same thing as to have a heart to deny ourselves for him in fact. The main and most proper proof of a man's having a heart to any thing, concerning which he is at liberty to follow his own inclinations, and either to do or not to do as he pleases, is his doing of it. When a man is at liberty whether to speak or keep silence, the most proper evidence of his having a heart to speak, is his speaking. When a man is at liberty whether to walk or sit still, the proper proof of his having a heart to walk, is his walking. Godliness consists not in heart to intend to do the will of God, but in a heart

to do it. The children of Israel in the wilderness had the former, of whom we read, " Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it, and do it. And the Lord heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me; and the Lord said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken. Oh that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" The people manifested that they had a heart to intend to keep God's commandments, and to be very forward in those intentions; but God manifests that this was far from being the thing that he desired, wherein true godliness consists, *even a heart actually to keep them.*

It is therefore exceedingly absurd, and even ridiculous, for any to pretend that they have a good heart, while they live a wicked life, or do not bring forth the fruit of universal holiness in their practice. For it is proved in fact, that such men do not love God above all. It is foolish to dispute against plain fact and experience. Men that live in ways of sin, and yet flatter themselves that they shall go to heaven, or expect to be received hereafter as holy persons, without a holy life and practice, act as though they expected to make a fool of their Judge. Which is implied in what the apostle says, (speaking of men's doing good works, and living a holy life, thereby exhibiting evidence of their title to everlasting life)— " Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatso-

ever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." As much as to say, "Do not deceive yourselves with an expectation of reaping life everlasting hereafter, if you do not sow to the Spirit here; it is in vain to think that God will be made a fool of by you, that he will be shammed and baffled with shadows instead of substance, and with vain pretences, instead of that good fruit which he expects, when the contrary to what you pretend appears plainly in your life, before his face." In this manner the word *mock* is sometimes used in Scripture. Thus Delilah says to Samson, "Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies;" that is, "Thou hast baffled me, as though you would make a fool of me, as if I might be easily turned off with any vain pretence, instead of the truth." So it is said that Lot, when he told his sons-in-law that God would destroy that place, "he seemed as one that mocked to his sons-in-law;" that is, he seemed as one that would make a game of them, as though they were such credulous fools as to regard such bugbears. But the great Judge, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, will not be mocked or baffled by any pretences, without a holy life. If in his name men have prophesied and wrought miracles, and have had faith, so that they could remove mountains, and cast out devils, and however high their religious affections may have been, however great resemblances they have had of grace, and though their hiding-place has been so dark and deep, that no human skill nor search could find them out; yet if they are workers or practisers of iniquity, they cannot hide their hypocrisy from their Judge: "There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may

hide themselves." Would a wise prince suffer himself to be fooled and baffled by a subject, who should pretend he was a loyal subject, and should tell his prince that he had an entire affection to him, and that at such and such a time he had experience of it, and felt his affections strongly working towards him, and should come expecting to be accepted and rewarded by his prince, as one of his best friends on that account, though he lived in rebellion against him, following some pretender to his crown, and from time to time stirring up sedition against him? Or would a master suffer himself to be shammed and gulled by a servant, that should pretend to great experiences of love and honour towards him in his heart, and a great sense of his worthiness and kindness to him, when at the same time he refused to obey him, and he could get no service done by him?

Argument II. As reason shows, that those things which occur in the course of life, that put it to the proof whether men will prefer God to other things in practice, are the proper trial of the uprightness and sincerity of their hearts; so the same are represented as the proper trial of the sincerity of professors in the Scripture. There we find that such things are called by that very name, trials or temptations, (which I before observed are both words of the same signification). The things that put it to the proof whether men will prefer God to other things in practice, are the difficulties of religion, or those things which occur that make the practice of duty difficult and cross to other principles besides the love of God; because in them, God and other things are both set before men together, for their actual and practical

choice; and it comes to this, that we cannot hold to both, but one or the other must be forsaken. And these things are all over the Scripture called by the name of trials or proofs.* And they are called by this name, because hereby professors are tried and proved of what sort they are, whether they be really what they profess and appear to be; and because in them, the reality of a supreme love to God is brought to the test of experiment and fact: they are the proper proofs in which it is truly determined by experience, whether men have a thorough disposition of heart to cleave to God or not: "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments, or not." "I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died; that through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord."

The Scripture, when it calls these difficulties of religion by the name of temptations or trials, explains itself to mean thereby the trial and experiment of their faith: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." "Now for a season ye are in heaviness, through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold," &c. So the apostle Paul speaks of that expensive duty of parting with our

* 2 Cor. viii. 2. Heb. xi. 36. 1 Pet. i. 7. and iv. 12. Gen. xxii. 1. Deut. viii. 2, 16. and xiii. 3. Exod. xv. 25. and xvi. 4. Judges ii. 22. and iii. 1, 4. Psalm lxvi. 10, 12. Dan. xii. 10. Rev. iii. 10. Job. xxiii. 10. Zech. xiii. 9. James i. 12. Rev. ii. 10. Luke viii. 13. Acts xx. 19. James i. 2, 3. 1 Peter i. 6.

substance to the poor, as the proof of the sincerity of the love of Christians, 2 Cor. viii. 8. And the difficulties of religion are often represented in Scripture, as being the trial of professors, in the same manner that the furnace is the proper trial of gold and silver: "Thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net, thou laidst affliction upon our loins." "And I will bring the third part of them through the fire, and I will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried." That which has the colour and appearance of gold, is put into the furnace to try whether it be what it seems to be, real gold or not. So the difficulties of religion are called trials, because they try those that have the profession and appearance of saints, whether they are what they appear to be, real saints.

If we put true gold into the furnace, we shall find its great value and preciousness; so the truth and inestimable value of the virtues of a true Christian appear when under these trials: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory." True and pure gold will come out of the furnace in full weight: so true saints when tried, come forth as gold. Christ distinguishes true grace from counterfeit by this, that it is "gold tried in the fire." So that it is evident, that these things are called trials in Scripture, principally as they try or prove the sincerity of professors. And, from what has now been observed, it is evident, that they are the most proper trial, or proof, of their sincerity; inasmuch as the very meaning of the word trial, as it

is ordinarily used in Scripture, is the difficulty occurring in the way of a professor's duty, as the trial or experiment of his sincerity. If trial of sincerity be the proper name of these difficulties of religion, then, doubtless, these difficulties of religion are properly and eminently the trial of sincerity; for they are doubtless eminently what they are called by the Holy Ghost: God gives things their name from that which is eminently their nature. And if it be so that these things are the proper and eminent trial, proof, or experiment of the sincerity of professors; then certainly the result of the trial or experiment, (that is, person's behaviour or practice under such trials,) is the proper and eminent evidence of their sincerity; for they are called trials or proofs, only with regard to the result, and because the effect is eminently the proof or evidence. And this is the most proper proof and evidence to the conscience of those that are the subjects of these trials. For, when God is said by these things to try men, and prove them, to see what is in their hearts, and whether they will keep his commandments or not; we are not to understand, that it is for his own information, or that he may obtain evidence himself of their sincerity; (for he needs no trials for his information;) but chiefly for their conviction, and to exhibit evidence to their consciences.*

Thus when God is said to prove Israel by the difficulties they met with in the wilderness, and by the

* "I am persuaded, as Calvin is, that all the several trials of men are to show them to themselves, and to the world, that they be but counterfeits; and to make saints known to themselves the better.—Rom. v. 5. Tribulation works trial, and that hope. Prov. xvii. 3. If you will know whether it will hold weight, the trial will tell you."—*Shepard's Parable*, Part I. p. 191.

difficulties they met with from their enemies in Canaan, to know what was in their hearts, whether they would keep his commandments, or not; it must be understood, that it was to discover them to themselves, that they might know what was in their own hearts. So when God tempted or tried Abraham with that difficult command of offering up his son, it was not for his satisfaction, whether he feared God or not, but for Abraham's own greater satisfaction and comfort, and the more clear manifestation of the favour of God to him. When Abraham had proved faithful under this trial, God says to him, "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." Which plainly implies, that, in this practical exercise of Abraham's grace under this trial, was a clearer evidence of the truth of his grace, than ever was before; and the greatest evidence to Abraham's conscience; because God himself gives it to Abraham as such, for his comfort and rejoicing; and speaks of it to him as what might be the greatest evidence to his conscience of his being upright in the sight of his Judge. Which proves what I say, that holy practice, under trials, is the highest evidence of the sincerity of professors to their own consciences. And we find that Christ, from time to time, took the same method to convince the consciences of those that pretended friendship to him, and to show them what they were. This was the method he took with the rich young man, Matth. xix. 16, &c. He seemed to show great respect to Christ; he came kneeling to him, and called him Good Master, and made a great profession of obedience to the commandments; but Christ tried him,

by bidding him go and sell all that he had, and give to the poor, and come and take up his cross and follow him; telling him, that then he should have treasure in heaven. So he tried another that we read of, Matth. viii. 20. He made a great profession of respect to Christ: says he, "Lord I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Christ immediately puts his friendship to the proof, by telling him, that the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay his head. And thus Christ is wont still to try professed disciples in general, in his providence. So the seed sown, in every kind of ground, stony ground, thorny ground, and good ground, which in all appears alike, when it first springs up, yet is tried, and the difference made to appear, by the burning heat of the sun.

Seeing, therefore, that these are the things that God makes use of to try us, it is undoubtedly the surest way for us to pass a right judgment on ourselves, to try ourselves by the same things. These trials of his are not for his information, but for ours; therefore we ought to receive our information from thence. The surest way to know our gold, is to look upon it, and examine it in God's furnace, where he tries it for that end, that we may see what it is. If we have a mind to know whether a building stands strong or not, we must look upon it when the wind blows. If we would know whether that which appears in the form of wheat, has the real substance of wheat, or be only chaff, we must observe it when it is winnowed. If we would know whether a staff be strong, or a rotten broken reed, we must observe it when it is leaned on, and weight is borne upon it.

If we would weigh ourselves justly, we must weigh ourselves in God's scales, that he makes use of to weigh us.* These trials, in the course of our prac-

* Dr. Sibbs, in his Bruised Reed, says, "When Christ's will cometh in competition with any worldly loss or gain, yet, if then, in that particular case, the heart will stoop to Christ, it is a true sign. For the truest trial of the power of grace, is in such particular cases as touch us nearest; for there our corruption maketh the greatest head. When Christ came home to the young man in the gospel, he lost a disciple of him."

Mr. Flavel speaks of a holy practice under trials, as the greatest evidence of grace. "No man (says he) can say what he is, whether his graces be true or false, until they be tried and examined by those things, which are to them as fire is to gold." *Touchstone of Sincerity*, chap. 4. sect. 1. Again, speaking of great difficulties and sufferings in the way of duty, wherein a person must actually part with what is dearest of a worldly nature, or with his duty; he says, "That such sufferings as these will discover the falseness and rottenness of men's hearts cannot be doubted, if you consider, that this is the fire designed by God for this very use and purpose, to separate the gold from the dross. So you will find it, 1 Pet. iv. 12. 'Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try you;' that is, The very design and aim of Providence, in permitting and ordering them, is to try you. Upon this account you find the hour of persecution (in a suitable notion) called the hour of temptation, or probation, Rev. iii. 10. For then professors are sifted to the very bran, searched to the very bottom principles. This is 'the day that burns as an oven; all that do wickedly shall be as stubble,' Mal. iv. 1. For, in that day, the predominant interest must appear and be discovered, it can be concealed no longer. 'No man can serve two masters,' saith Christ, Luke xvi. 13. A man may serve many masters, if they all command the same thing, or things subordinate to each other; but he cannot serve two masters, if their commands clash and interfere with each other: and such are the commands of Christ and the flesh in a suffering hour;—thus the two interests come in full opposition. And now have but patience and wait a little, and you will discern which is predominant. A dog follows two men, while they both walk one way, and you know not which of the two is his master: stay but a little until their path parts, and then you shall quickly see who is his master: so in this case." And, in another chapter, he says, "Great numbers of persons are deceived and destroyed by trusting to seeming untried grace. This was the miserable condition of the Laodicean professors; they reckoned themselves rich, but were really poor: all is not gold that glisters: their gold (as they accounted it) was never tried in the fire. If a man's whole estate lay in some pre-

tice, are, as it were, the balances in which our hearts are weighed, or in which Christ and the world, or Christ and his competitors, as to the esteem and regard they have in our hearts, are weighed, or are put into opposite scales, by which there is opportunity to see which preponderates. When a man is brought to the dividing of paths, the one of which leads to Christ, and the other to the objects of his lusts, to see which way he will go, or is brought, and, as it were, set between Christ and the world, Christ on the right hand, and the world on the left, so that, if he goes to one he must leave the other, to see which his heart inclines most to, or which preponderates in his heart; this is just the same thing as laying Christ and the world in two opposite scales: and his going to the one, and leaving the other, is just the same thing as the sinking of one scale, and rising of the other. A man's practice, therefore, under the trials of God's providence, are as much the proper experiment and evidence of the superior inclination of his heart, as the motion of the balance, with different

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cious stone, suppose a rich diamond, how is he concerned to have it thoroughly tried, to see whether it will bear a smart stroke with the hammer, or fly like a Bristol diamond!"—*Ibid.* chap. x. sect. 3. Again, in the same place, "The promises of salvation are made over to tried grace, and that only as will endure the trial."

"The Lord will try you. God hath his trying times; and they were never sent, but to discover who were dross, who were gold. And the main end of all God's trials, is to discover this truth that I am pressing upon you. Some have a thorough work; and now the trial discovers the truth, as in Abraham, Heb. xi. 17. Some have a superficial work, and they fall in trial, as in Saul; and it doth discover it was but an overly work. For this is the question God makes, Is it thorough or no? Ay, saith the carnal heart; Yes, saith a gracious heart. Hence it is strange to see what men will do when a trial comes."—*Shepard's Parable*, Part I. p. 219.

"There is an hour of temptation which tries men, which will discover men indeed."—*Ibid.* Part II. p. 60.

weights in opposite scales, is the proper experiment of the superior weight.

Argument III. Another argument, that holy practice, in the sense which has been explained, is the highest kind of evidence of the truth of grace to the consciences of Christians, is, that in practice, grace, in Scripture style, is said to be made perfect, or to be finished. So the apostle James says, "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect," or finished? (as the word in the original properly signifies.) So the love of God is said to be made perfect, or finished, in keeping his commandments: 1 John ii. 4, 5. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected." The commandment of Christ, to which the apostle has especial respect, when he here speaks of our keeping his commandments, is, as I observed before, that great commandment of his, which respects deeds of love to our brethren, as appears by the following verses. Again, the love of God is said to be perfected in the same sense: "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." Here, doubtless, the apostle has still respect to loving one another, in the same manner that he had explained in the preceding chapter, speaking of loving one another as a sign of the love of God: "Whoso hath this world's good, and shutteth up his bowels, &c. how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed, (or in work,) and in truth." By thus loving in work, the apostle says, "The love of God is perfected in

us." Grace is said to be perfected or finished in holy practice, as therein it is brought to its proper effect, and to that exercise which is the end of the principle; the tendency and design of grace herein is reached, and its operation completed and crowned. As the tree is made perfect in the fruit;—it is not perfected in the seed's being planted in the ground; it is not perfected in the first quickening of the seed, and in its putting forth root and sprout: nor is it perfected when it comes up out of the ground; nor is it perfected in bringing forth leaves; nor yet in putting forth blossoms: but, when it has brought forth good ripe fruit, then it is perfected, therein it reaches its end, the design of the tree is finished: all that belongs to the tree is completed and brought to its proper effect in the fruit. So is grace in its practical exercises. Grace is said to be made perfect, or finished in its work or fruit, in the same manner as it is said of sin: "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Here are three steps; first, sin in its principle or habit, in the being of lust in the heart; and nextly, here is its conceiving, consisting in the immanent exercises of it in the mind; and lastly, here is the fruit that was conceived, actually brought forth in the wicked work and practice. And this the apostle calls the finishing or perfecting of sin; for the word, in the original, is the same that is translated *perfected* in those forementioned places.

Now, certainly if it be so, if grace be in this manner made perfect in its fruit, if these practical exercises of grace are those exercises wherein grace is brought to its proper effect and end, and the exer-

cises wherein whatsoever belongs to its design, tendency, and operation, is completed and crowned; then these exercises must be the highest evidences of grace, above all other exercises. Certainly the proper nature and tendency of every principle must appear best and most fully in its most perfect exercises, or in those exercises wherein its nature is most completely exerted, and in its tendency most fully answered and crowned, in its proper effect and end. If we would see the proper nature of any thing whatever, and see it in its full distinction from other things, let us look upon it in the finishing of it. The apostle James says, by works is faith made perfect; and introduces this as an argument to prove, that works are the chief evidence of faith, whereby the sincerity of the professors of faith is justified. And the apostle John, after he had once and again told us that love was made perfect in keeping Christ's commandments, observes, (1 John iv. 18.) that, "perfect love casteth out fear;" meaning (at least in part) love made perfect in this sense; agreeable to what he had said in the foregoing chapter, that, by loving in deed, or work, "we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts."

Argument IV. Another thing which makes it evident, that holy practice is the principal evidence that we ought to make use of in judging both of our own and others' sincerity, is, that this evidence is above all others insisted on in Scripture. A common acquaintance with the Scripture, together with a little attention and observation, will be sufficient to show to any one, that this is ten times more insisted on as a note of true piety, throughout the Scripture, from the

beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelations, than any thing else. And, in the New Testament, where Christ and his apostles do expressly, and of declared purpose, lay down signs of true godliness, this is almost wholly insisted on. It may be observed, that Christ, and his apostles, do not only often say those things, in their discoursing on the great doctrines of religion, which do show what the nature of true godliness must be, or from whence the nature and signs of it may be inferred by just consequence, and often occasionally mention many things which do appertain to godliness: but they also often, of set purpose, give signs and marks for the trial of professors, putting them upon trying themselves by the signs they give, introducing what they say with such-like expressions as these: "By this you shall know that you know God. By this are manifest the children of God and the children of the devil. He that hath this builds on a good foundation; he that hath it not, builds on the sand. Hereby we shall assure our hearts. He is the man that loveth Christ," &c. But I can find no place, where either Christ or his apostles do, in this manner, give signs of godliness, (though the places are many,) but where Christian practice is almost the only thing insisted on. Indeed, in many of these places, love to the brethren is spoken of as a sign of godliness; and, as I have observed before, there is no one virtuous affection, or disposition, so often expressly spoken of as a sign of true grace, as our having love one to another; but then the Scriptures explain themselves to intend chiefly this love as exercised and expressed in practice, or in deeds of love. So does the apostle John,

who above all others insists on love to the brethren as a sign of godliness, most expressly explain himself: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother abideth in death.—Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us love not in word, neither in tongue; but in deed, (that is, in deeds of love,) and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." So that, when the Scripture so much insists on our loving one another, as a great sign of godliness, we are not thereby to understand the immanent workings of affection which men feel one to another, so much as the soul's practising all the duties of the second table of the law; all which the New Testament tells us, again and again, a true love one to another comprehends; Rom. xiii. 8, 10. Gal. v. 14. Matth. xxii. 39, 40. So that, really there is no place in the New Testament where the declared design is to give signs of godliness; but that holy practice, and keeping Christ's commandments, is the mark chosen out from all others to be insisted on. Which is an invincible argument, that it is the chief of all the evidences of godliness: unless we suppose that, when Christ and his apostles on design set themselves about this business of giving signs, by which professing Christians, in all ages, might determine their state; they did not know how to choose signs so well as we could have chosen for them. But, if we make the word of Christ our rule, then undoubtedly those marks which

Christ and his apostles did chiefly lay down, and give to us, that we might try ourselves by them, those same marks we ought especially to receive, and chiefly to make use of, in the trial of ourselves.* And surely those things which Christ and his apostles chiefly insisted on in the rules they gave, ministers ought chiefly to insist on in the rules they give. To insist much on those things that the Scripture insists little on, and to insist very little on those things on which the Scripture insists much, is a dangerous thing; because it is going out of God's way, and is to judge ourselves, and guide others, in an unscriptural manner. God knew which way of leading and guiding souls was safest and best for them: he insisted so much on some things, because he knew it to be needful that they should be insisted on; and let other things more alone as a wise God, because he knew it was not best for us, so much to lay the weight of the trial there. As the Sabbath was made for man, so the Scriptures were made for man; and they are, by Infinite Wisdom, fitted for our use and benefit. We should, therefore, make them our guide in all things, in our thoughts of religion, and of ourselves. And for us to make that great which the Scripture makes little, and that little which the Scripture makes great, tends to give us a monstrous idea of religion, and (at least indirectly and gradually) to lead us wholly away from the right rule, and from a right opinion of ourselves, and to establish delusion and hypocrisy.

* "It is a sure rule," says Dr. Preston, "that what the Scriptures bestow much words on, we should have much thoughts on; and what the Holy Ghost urgeth most, we should prize most."—*Church's Carriage.*

Argument V. Christian practice is plainly spoken of in the word of God, as the main evidence of the truth of grace, not only to others, but to men's own consciences. It is not only more spoken of and insisted on than other signs, but in many places where it is spoken of, it is represented as the chief of all evidences. This is plain in the manner of expression from time to time. If God were now to speak from heaven to resolve our doubts concerning signs of godliness, and should give some particular sign, that by it all might know whether they were sincerely godly or not, with such emphatical expressions as these, the man that has such a qualification or mark, 'that is the man that is a true saint, that is the very man, by this you may know, this is the thing by which it is manifest who are saints and who are sinners, such men as these are saints indeed;' should not we look upon it as a thing beyond doubt, that this was given as a special, and eminently distinguishing note of true godliness? But this is the very case with respect to the sign of grace of which I am speaking: God has again and again uttered himself in his word in this very manner, concerning Christian practice, as John xiv. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." This Christ gives to the disciples, not so much to guide them in judging of others, but to apply to themselves for their own comfort after his departure, as appears by every word of the context. And by the way I would observe, that not only the emphasis with which Christ utters himself is remarkable, but also his so much insisting on, and repeating the matter, as he does in the context: ver. 15. "If

ye love me, keep my commandments." Ver. 23. "If a man love me, he will keep my words." And ver. 24. "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings." And in the next chapter over and over: Ver. 2. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it." Ver. 8. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." Ver. 14. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." We have this mark laid down with the same emphasis again, John viii. 31. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." And again, 1 John ii. 3. "Hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." And, ver. 5. "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him." And chap. iii. 18, 19. "Let us love in deed, and in truth; hereby we know that we are of the truth." What is translated *hereby*, would have been a little more emphatical, if it had been rendered more literally from the original, By this we do know.—And how evidently is holy practice spoken of as the grand note of distinction between the children of God and the children of the devil, in ver. 10. of the same chapter? "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." Speaking of a holy, and a wicked practice, as may be seen in all the context; as ver. 3. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Ver. 6—10. "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doth

righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil.—Whosoever is born of God sinneth not.—Whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God."—So we have the like emphasis, 2 John 6. "This is love, that we walk after his commandments:" that is, 'This is the proper evidence of love.' So 1 John v. 3. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." So the apostle James, speaking of the proper evidences of true and pure religion, says, "Pure religion, and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." We have the like emphatical expressions used about the same thing in the Old Testament: "And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." "Did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice?—He judged the cause of the poor and needy: was not this to know me? saith the Lord." "Come, ye children, unto me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord.—Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it." "Who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly," &c. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart," &c. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord." "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil."

So the Scripture never uses such emphatical expressions concerning any other signs of hypocrisy, and unsoundness of heart, as concerning an unholy practice: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, &c. shall inherit the kingdom of God." "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, &c. hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words." "Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil." "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." "If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity." "An highway shall be there, and it shall be called, The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it." "And there shall in nowise enter into it, whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." And in many places, "Depart from me, I know you not, ye that work iniquity."

Argument VI. Another thing which makes it evi-

dent that holy practice is the chief of all the signs of the sincerity of professors, not only to the world, but to their own consciences, is, that this is the grand evidence which will hereafter be made use of, before the judgment-seat of God; according to which his judgment will be regulated, and the state of every professor of religion unalterably determined. In the future judgment there will be an open trial of professors; and evidences will be made use of in the judgment. For God's future judging of men, in order to their eternal retribution, will not be his trying, and finding out, and passing a judgment upon the state of men's hearts, in his own mind: but it will be a declarative judgment; and the end of it will be, not God's forming a judgment within himself, but the manifestation of his judgment, and the righteousness of it, to men's own consciences, and to the world. And therefore the day of judgment is called, "The day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." And the end of God's future trial and judgment of men, as to the part that each one in particular is to have in the judgment, will be especially the clear manifestation of God's righteous judgment, with respect to him, to his conscience; as is manifest by Matthew xviii. 31, to the end, xx. 8, 15. xxii. 11—13. xxv. 19—30, 35, to the end. Luke xix. 15—23. And therefore, though God needs no medium, whereby to make the truth evident to himself, yet evidences will be made use of in his future judging of men. And, doubtless, the evidences that will be made use of, in their trial, will be such as will be best fitted to serve the ends of the judgment; namely, the manifestation of the righteous judgment of God,

not only to the world, but to men's own consciences. But the Scriptures abundantly teach us, that the grand evidences which the Judge will make use of in the trial, for these ends, according to which the judgment of every one shall be regulated, and the irreversible sentence passed, will be men's works, or practice, here in this world: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened;—and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell gave up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works." "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, whether it be good or bad." So men's practice is the only evidence that Christ represents the future judgment as regulated by, in that most particular description of the day of judgment which we have in the Holy Bible.* The judge, at the day of judgment, will not (for the conviction of men's own consciences, and to manifest them to the world) go about to examine men, as to the method of their experiences, or set every man to tell his story of the manner of his conversion; but his works will be brought forth, as evidences of what he has, what he has done in darkness and in light: "For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether

* Matthew xxv. at the latter end. See also Rom. ii. 6—13. Jer. xvii. 10. Job xxxiv. 11. Prov. xxiv. 12. Jer. xxxii. 19. Rev. xxii. 12. Matth. xvi. 27. Rev. ii. 23. Ezek. xxxiii. 20. 1 Peter i. 17.

it be good, or whether it be evil." In the trial of which professors shall be the subjects in the future judgment, God will make use of the same evidences, to manifest them to themselves and to the world, which he makes use of to manifest them in the temptations or trials of his providence here, namely, their practice, in cases wherein Christ and other things come into actual and immediate competition. At the day of judgment, God, for the manifestation of his righteous judgment, will weigh professors in a balance that is visible. And the balance will be the same that he weighs men in now, which has been already described.

Hence we may undoubtedly infer, that men's works (taken in the sense that has been explained) are the highest evidences by which they ought to try themselves.—Certainly that which our supreme Judge will chiefly make use of to judge us by, when we come to stand before him, we should chiefly make use of to judge ourselves by.* If it had not been revealed in what manner, and by what evidence the Judge would proceed with us hereafter, how natural would it be for one to say, 'O that I knew what token God will chiefly look for and insist upon in the last and decisive judgment, and which he expects that all should be able to produce, who would then be accepted of him, and according to which sentence shall

* "That which God maketh a rule of his own judgment, as that by which he judgeth of every man, that is a sure rule for every man to judge himself by. That which we shall be judged by at the last day, is a sure rule to apply to ourselves for the present. Now, by our obedience and works he judgeth us. 'He will give to every man according to his works.'"—*Dr. Preston's Church's Carriage.*

be passed; that I might know what token or evidence especially to look at and seek after now, as I would be sure not to fail then!' And seeing God has so plainly and abundantly revealed what this token or evidence is, surely, if we act wisely, we shall regard it as of the greatest importance.

Now, from all that has been said, I think it abundantly manifest, that Christian practice is the most proper evidence of the gracious sincerity of professors to themselves and others; and the chief of all the marks of grace, the sign of signs, and evidence of evidences, that which seals and crowns all other signs. —I had rather have the testimony of my conscience, that I have such a saying of my supreme Judge on my side as that, John xiv. 21. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me," than the judgment and fullest approbation of all wise, sound, and experienced divines, that have lived this thousand years, on the most exact and critical examination of my experiences, as to the manner of my conversion. Not that there are no other good evidences of a state of grace but this. There may be other exercises of grace, besides these efficient exercises, which the saints may have in contemplation, that may be very satisfying to them, but yet this is the chief and most proper evidence. There may be several good evidences that a tree is a fig-tree; but the highest and most proper evidence of it is, that it actually bears figs. It is possible, that a man may have a good assurance of a state of grace, at his first conversion, before he has had opportunity to gain assurance, by this great evidence of which I am speaking. If a man hears that a great treasure is offered him, in a

distant place, on condition that he will prize it so much, as to be willing to leave what he possesses at home, and go a journey for it, over the rocks and mountains that are in the way, to the place where it is; it is possible the man may be well assured, that he values the treasure to the degree spoken of, as soon as the offer is made him. He may feel a willingness to go for the treasure, within him, beyond all doubt; but yet, this does not hinder but that his actual going for it is the highest and proper evidence, not only to others, but to himself, of his being willing. But then, as an evidence to himself, his outward actions, and the motions of his body in his journey, are not considered alone, exclusive of the action of his mind, and a consciousness within himself of the thing that moves him, and the end he goes for; otherwise his bodily motion is no evidence to him of his prizing the treasure. In such a manner is Christian practice the most proper evidence of a saving value of the pearl of great price, and treasure hid in the field.

Christian practice is the sign of signs, in this sense, that it is the great evidence which confirms and crowns all other signs of godliness. There is no one grace of the Spirit of God, but that Christian practice is the most proper evidence of the truth of it. As it is with the members of our bodies, and all our utensils, the proper proof of the soundness and goodness of them, is in the use of them; so it is with our graces, (which are given to be used in practice, as much as our hands and feet, or the tools with which we work, or the arms with which we fight,) the proper trial and proof of them is in their exercise in practice. Most of the things we use are

serviceable to us, and so have their serviceableness proved, in some pressure, straining, agitation, or collision. So it is with a bow, a sword, an axe, a saw, a cord, a chain, a staff, a foot, a tooth, &c. And they that are so weak as not to bear the strain or pressure we need to put them to, are good for nothing. So it is with all the virtues of the mind. The proper trial and proof of them is, in being exercised under those temptations and trials under which God brings us, in the course of his providence, and in being put to such service as strains hard upon the principles of nature.

Practice is the proper proof of the true and saving knowledge of God; as appears by that of the apostle already mentioned, "Hereby do we know that we know him, that we keep his commandments." It is in vain for us to profess that we know God, if in works we deny him. Titus i. 16. And if we know God, but glorify him not as God, our knowledge will only condemn us, and not save us. Rom. i. 21. The great note of that knowledge which saves and makes happy, is, that it is practical: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." "To depart from evil is understanding."

Holy practice is the proper evidence of repentance. When the Jews professed repentance, when they came confessing their sins to John, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; he directed them to the right way of getting and exhibiting proper evidences of the truth of their repentance, when he said to them, "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance." Which was agreeable to the practice of the apostle Paul: see Acts xxvi. 20.

Pardon and mercy are from time to time promised to him who has this evidence of true repentance, that he forsakes his sin, Prov. xxviii. 13. and Isa. lv. 7. and many other places.

Holy practice is the proper evidence of a saving faith. It is evident that the apostle James speaks of works, as what does eminently justify faith, or (which is the same thing) justify the professors of faith, and vindicate and manifest the sincerity of their profession, not only to the world, but to their own consciences; as is evident by the instances he gives of Abraham, James ii. 21—24. And in ver. 20—26. he speaks of the practical and working nature of faith, as the very life and soul of it: in the same manner that the active nature and substance, which is in the body of a man, is the life and soul of that. And if so, doubtless practice is the proper evidence of the life and soul of true faith, by which it is distinguished from a dead faith. For doubtless, practice is the most proper evidence of a practical nature, and operation the most proper evidence of an operative nature.

Practice is the best evidence of a saving belief of the truth. That is spoken of as the proper evidence of the truth's being in a professing Christian, that he walks in the truth: "I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth."

Practice is the most proper evidence of a true coming to Christ, and accepting of, and closing with him. A true and saving coming to Christ is, (as Christ often teaches,) a coming so as to forsake all for him. And, as was observed before, to forsake all for Christ in heart, is the same thing as to have a heart actually to forsake all; but the proper evi-

dence of having a heart actually to forsake all, is, indeed, actually to forsake all so far as called to it. If a prince make suit to a woman in a far country, that she would forsake her own people, and father's house, and come to him to be his bride, the proper evidence of the compliance of her heart with the king's suit, is her actually forsaking her own people and father's house, and coming to him. By this, her compliance with the king's suit is made perfect, in the same sense that the apostle James says, "By works is faith made perfect."* Christ promises us eternal life, on condition of our coming to him: but it is such a coming as he directed the young man to, who came to inquire what he shall do that he might have eternal life: Christ bid him go and sell all that he had, and come to him, and follow him. If he had consented in his heart to the proposal, and had therein come to Christ in his heart, the proper evidence of it would have been his doing of it; and therein his coming to Christ would have been made perfect. When Christ called Levi the publican, when sitting at the receipt of custom, and in the midst of his worldly gains, the closing of Levi's heart with this invitation of his Saviour to come to him, was manifested, and made perfect by his actually rising

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* "Our real taking of Christ appears in our actions and works. Isa. i. 19. If ye consent and obey, ye shall eat the good things of the land. That is, if ye will consent to take JEHOVAH for your Lord and King: if ye give consent; there is the first thing: but that is not enough; but if ye also obey. The consent that standeth in the inward act of the mind, the truth of it will be seen in your obedience, in the acts of your lives. If ye consent and obey, ye shall eat the good things of the land; that is, you shall take of all that he hath that is convenient for you: for then you are married to him in truth, and have an interest in all his goods."—*Dr. Preston's Church's Carriage.*

up, leaving all, and following him. Christ, and other things, are set before us together, for us practically to cleave to one, and forsake the other; in such a case, a practical cleaving to Christ is a practical acceptance of Christ; as much as a beggar's reaching out his hand and taking a gift that is offered, is his practical acceptance of the gift. Yea, that act of the soul that is in cleaving to Christ in practice, is itself the most perfect coming of the soul to Christ.

Practice is the most proper evidence of trusting in Christ for salvation. The proper signification of the word *trust*, according to the more ordinary use of it, both in common speech and in the Holy Scriptures, is the emboldening and encouragement of a person's mind, to run some venture in practice, or in something that he does on the credit of another's sufficiency and faithfulness. And, therefore, the proper evidence of his trusting, is the venture he runs in what he does. He is not properly said to run any venture, in a dependence on any thing, that does nothing on that dependence, or whose practice is no otherwise than if he had no dependence. For a man to run a venture on a dependence on another, is for him to do something from that dependence by which he seems to expose himself, and which he would not do, were it not for that dependence. And, therefore, it is in complying with the difficulties, and seeming dangers of Christian practice, in a dependence on Christ's sufficiency and faithfulness to bestow eternal life, that persons are said to venture themselves upon Christ, and trust in him for happiness and life. They depend on such promises as that, " He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." And so they part with all, and venture their all in a dependence

on Christ's sufficiency and truth. And this is the Scripture notion of trusting in Christ, in the exercise of a saving faith in him. Thus Abraham, the father of believers, trusted in Christ, and by faith forsook his own country, in a reliance on the covenant of grace God established with him. Thus, also, "Moses, by faith, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." So, by faith, others exposed themselves to be stoned and sawn in sunder, or slain with the sword: "endured the trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, bonds and imprisonments, and wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented." And in this sense the apostle Paul, by faith, trusted in Christ, and committed himself to him, venturing himself, and his whole interest, in a dependence on the ability and faithfulness of his Redeemer, under great persecutions, and in sufferings, the loss of all things: "For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

If a man should have word brought him from the king of a distant island, that he intended to make him his heir, if, upon receiving the tidings, he immediately leaves his native land, and friends, and all that he has in the world, to go to that country, in a dependence on what he hears, then he may be said to venture himself, and all that he has in the world upon it. But, if he only sits still, and hopes for the promised benefit, inwardly pleasing himself with the thoughts of it; he cannot properly be said to venture

himself upon it; he runs no venture in the case; he does nothing, otherwise than he would do, if he had received no such tidings, by which he would be exposed to any suffering in case all should fail. So he that, on the credit of what he hears of a future world, and in a dependence on the report of the gospel, concerning life and immortality, forsakes all, or does so at least, so far as there is occasion, making every thing entirely give place to his eternal interest; he, and he only, may properly be said to venture himself on the report of the gospel. And this is the proper evidence of a true trust in Christ for salvation.

Practice is the proper evidence of a gracious love, both to God and men. The texts that plainly teach this, have been so often mentioned already, that it is needless to repeat them.

Practice is the proper evidence of humility. That expression, and manifestation of humility of heart, of which God speaks, as the great expression of it, on which he insists; that we should look upon as the proper expression and manifestation of it: but this is walking humbly: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

This is also the proper evidence of the true fear of God: "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." "Come, ye children, hearken unto me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord.—Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it." "Fear the Lord, and depart from evil." "By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil." "Hast thou considered my servant Job,—a perfect and an

upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him." "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes."

So, practice, in rendering again according to benefits received, is the proper evidence of true thankfulness. "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" "But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him." Paying our vows unto God, and ordering our conversation aright, seem to be spoken of as the proper expression and evidence of true thankfulness, in the 50th Psalm: "Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay vows to the Most High." "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God."

So the proper evidence of gracious desires and longings, and that which distinguishes them from those that are false and vain, is, that they are not idle wishes and wouldings, like Balaam's, but effectual in practice to stir up persons earnestly and thoroughly to seek the things they long for. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after." "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is, to see thy power and thy glory.—My soul followeth hard after thee." "Draw me, we will run after thee."

Practice is the proper evidence of a gracious hope, "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Patient continuance

in well-doing, through the difficulties and trials of the Christian course, is often mentioned as the proper expression and fruit of a Christian hope: "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love." "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, as obedient children," &c. "Lord, I have hoped in thy salvation, and done thy commandments." "That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of the Lord, but keep his commandments."

A cheerful practice of our duty, and doing the will of God, is the proper evidence of a truly holy joy. "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness." "Thy testimonies have I taken for my heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even to the end." "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches." "Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." "The abundance of their joy abounded unto the riches of their liberality."

Practice also is the proper evidence of Christian fortitude. The trial of a good soldier is not in his chimney-corner, but in the field of battle: 1 Cor. ix. 25, 26. 2 Tim. ii. 3—5.

And, as the fruit of holy practice is the chief evidence of the truth of grace, so the degree in which experiences have influence on a person's practice, is the surest evidence of the degree of that which is spiritual and divine in his experiences. Whatever pretences persons may make to great discoveries, great love and joys, they are no farther to be regarded

than they have influence on their practice. Not but that allowances must be made for the natural temper. That, however, does not hinder, but that the degree of grace is justly measured by the degree of the effect in practice. For the effect of grace is as great, and the alteration as remarkable, in a very ill natural temper, as another. Although a person of such a temper, will not behave himself so well, with the same degree of grace, as another, the diversity from what he was before conversion may be as great: because a person of a good natural temper did not behave himself so ill before conversion.

Thus I have endeavoured to represent the evidence there is, that Christian practice is the chief of all the signs of saving grace. And, before I conclude this discourse, I would say something briefly in answer to two objections, that may possibly be made by some against what has been said upon this head.

Objection I. Some may be ready to say, this seems to be contrary to that opinion, so much received among good people; that professors should judge of their state, chiefly by their inward experience, and that spiritual experiences are the main evidences of true grace.

I answer, It is, doubtless, a true opinion, and justly much received among good people, that professors should chiefly judge of their state by their experience. But it is a great mistake, that what has been said is at all contrary to that opinion. The chief sign of grace to the consciences of Christians, being Christian practice, in the sense that has been explained, and according to what has been shown to be the true notion of Christian practice, is not at all

inconsistent with Christian experience being the chief evidence of grace. Christian or holy practice is spiritual practice; and that is not the motion of a body that knows not how, nor when, nor wherefore it moves: but spiritual practice in man is the practice of a spirit and body jointly; or the practice of a spirit animating, commanding, and actuating a body to which it is united, and over which it has power given it by the Creator. And, therefore, the main thing in this holy practice, is the holy acts of the mind, directing and governing the motions of the body. And the motions of the body are to be looked upon as belonging to Christian practice, only secondarily, and as they are dependent and consequent on the acts of the soul. The exercises of grace that Christians find, or are conscious of within themselves, are what they experience within themselves; and herein therefore lies Christian experience: and this Christian experience consists as much in those operative exercises of grace in the will, that are immediately concerned in the management of the behaviour of the body, as in other exercises. These inward exercises are not the less a part of Christian experience because they have outward behaviour immediately connected with them. A strong act of love to God, is not the less a part of spiritual experience, because it is the act that immediately produces and effects some self-denying and expensive outward action, which is much to the honour and glory of God.

To speak of Christian experience and practice, as if they were two things, properly and entirely distinct, is to make a distinction without consideration or reason. Indeed, all Christian experience is not properly called practice, but all Christian practice is properly

experience.—And the distinction that is made between them, is not only an unreasonable, but an unscriptural distinction. Holy practice is one kind or part of Christian experience; and both reason and Scripture represent it as the chief, and most important, and most distinguishing part of it. So it is represented: "Did not thy father eat and drink, and do justice in judgment?—He judged the cause of the poor and needy:—was not this to know me? saith the Lord. Our inward acquaintance with God surely belongs to the head of experimental religion; but this God represents as consisting chiefly in that experience which there is in holy practice. So the exercises of those graces of the love of God, and the fear of God, are a part of experimental religion; but these the Scripture represents as consisting chiefly in practice, in those forementioned texts: "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." "This is love, that we walk after his commandments." "Come, ye children, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord.—Depart from evil, and do good." In such experiences as these Hezekiah chiefly took comfort on his sick-bed, when he said, "Remember, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart." And such experiences as these the Psalmist chiefly insists on, in the 119th Psalm, and elsewhere.

Such experiences as these the apostle Paul mainly insists upon, when he speaks of his experiences in his epistles: "God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son." "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." "We having the same spirit of faith,

according as it is written, I have believed, and therefore have I spoken: we also believe, and therefore speak." "We walk by faith, not by sight." "The love of Christ constraineth us." "In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the power of God." "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ." "Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily." "We were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention." "Being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail, labouring night and day.—Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably, we behaved ourselves among you." And such experiences as these they were, that this blessed apostle chiefly comforted himself in the consideration of, when he was going to martyrdom: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

And not only does the most important and dis-

tinguishing part of Christian experience lie in spiritual practice; but such is the nature of that sort of exercises of grace, wherein spiritual practice consists, that nothing is so properly called by the name of experimental religion. For that experience, which is in these exercises of grace, that are found and prove effectual at the very point of trial, wherein God proves to which we will actually cleave, whether to Christ or our lusts—are the proper experiment of the truth and power of our godliness; wherein its victorious power and efficacy, in producing its proper effect, and reaching its end, is found by experience. This is properly Christian experience, wherein the saints have opportunity to see, by actual experience and trial, whether they have a heart to do the will of God, and to forsake other things for Christ, or not. As that is called experimental philosophy, which brings opinions and notions to the test of fact, so is that properly called experimental religion, which brings religious affections and intentions to the like test.

There is a sort of external religious practice, wherein is no inward experience, of which no account is made in the sight of God, and is esteemed good for nothing. And there is what is called experience, that is without practice, being neither accompanied nor followed with a Christian behaviour; and this is worse than nothing.—Many persons seem to have very wrong notions of Christian experience and spiritual light and discoveries. Whenever a person finds within him a heart to treat God as God, at the time that he has the trial, and finds his disposition effectual in the experiment that is the most proper, and most distinguishing experience. And to have, at such a time, that sense of divine things, that

apprehension of the truth, importance, and excellency of the things of religion, which then sways and prevails, and governs his heart and hands; this is the most excellent spiritual light, and these are the most distinguishing discoveries. Religion consists much in holy affection; but those exercises of affection which are most distinguishing of true religion, are these practical exercises. Friendship between earthly friends consists much in affection; but yet, those strong exercises of affection that actually carry them through fire and water for each other, are the highest evidences of true friendship.

There is nothing in what has been said, contrary to what is asserted by some sound divines; when they say, that there are no sure evidences of grace but the acts of grace. For that doth not hinder, but that these operative productive acts, those exercises of grace that are effectual in practice, may be the highest evidences above all other kinds of acts of grace. Nor does it hinder, but that, when there are many of these acts and exercises, following one another in a course, under various trials of every kind, the evidence is still heightened; as one act confirms another. A man, once by seeing his neighbour, may have good evidence of his presence; but by seeing him from day to day, and conversing with him, in various circumstances, the evidence is established. The disciples, when they first saw Christ, after his resurrection, had good evidence that he was alive; but, by conversing with him for forty days, and his showing himself to them alive, by many infallible proofs, they had yet higher evidence.*

* "The more these visible exercises of grace are renewed, the more certain you will be. The more frequently these actings are

The witness or seal of the Spirit of which we read, doubtless consists in the effect of the Spirit of God in the heart, in the implantation and exercises of grace there, and so consists in experience. And it is also beyond doubt, that this seal of the Spirit is the highest kind of evidence of the saints' adoption that ever they obtain. But in these exercises of grace in practice, that have been spoken of, God gives witness, and sets to his seal, in the most conspicuous, eminent, and evident manner. It has been abundantly found to be true in fact, by the experience of the Christian church, that Christ commonly gives, by his Spirit, the greatest and most joyful evidences to his saints of their sonship, in those effectual exercises of grace under trials, which have been spoken of; as is manifest in the full assurance and unspeakable joys of many of the martyrs—"If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." "We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, and glory in tribulations." And agreeable to what the apostle Paul often declares of what he experienced in his trials. And when the Apostle Peter, in my

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renewed, the more abiding and confirmed your assurance will be. A man that has been assured of such visible exercises of grace, may quickly after be in doubt whether he was not mistaken. But when such actings are renewed again and again, he grows more settled and established about his good estate. If a man see a thing once, that makes him sure; but if, afterwards, he fears he was deceived, when he comes to see it again, he is more sure he was not mistaken. If a man read such passages in a book, he is sure it is so. Some months after, some may bear him down, that he was mistaken, so as to make him question it himself; but, when he looks, and reads it again, he is abundantly confirmed. The more men's grace is multiplied, the more their peace is multiplied. 2 Pet. i. 2. 'Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and Jesus our Lord.'"—*Stoddard's Way to know Sincerity and Hypocrisy.*

text, speaks of the joy unspeakable and full of glory, which the Christians to whom he wrote experienced, he has respect to what they found under persecution, as appears by the context. Christ's thus manifesting himself, as the friend and Saviour of his saints, cleaving to him under trials, seems to have been represented of old, by his coming and manifesting himself, to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the furnace. And when the apostle speaks of the witness of the Spirit, in Rom. viii. 15—17. he has a more immediate respect to what the Christians experienced, in their exercises of love to God, in suffering persecution; as is plain by the context. He is, in the foregoing verses, encouraging the Christian Romans under their sufferings, that though their bodies be dead, because of sin, yet they should be raised to life again. But it is more especially plain by the verse immediately following, ver. 18. "For I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." So the apostle has evidently respect to their persecutions, in all that he says to the end of the chapter. So when the apostle speaks of the earnest of the Spirit, which God had given to him, in 2 Cor. v. 5. the context shows plainly that he has respect to what was given him in his great trials and sufferings. And in that promise of the white stone, and new name, to him that overcomes, Rev. ii. 17. it is evident Christ has a special respect to a benefit that Christians should obtain, by overcoming, in the trial they had, in that day of persecution. This appears by verse 13. and many other passages in this epistle to the seven churches of Asia.

Objection II. Some also may be ready to object

against what has been said of Christian practice being the chief evidence of the truth of grace, that this is a legal doctrine; and that this making practice a thing of such great importance in religion, magnifies works, and tends to lead men to make too much of their own doings, to the diminution of the glory of free grace, and does not seem well to consist with that great gospel doctrine of justification by faith alone.

But this objection is altogether without reason. Which way is it inconsistent with the freeness of God's grace, that holy practice should be a sign of God's grace? It is our works being the price of God's favour, and not their being the sign of it, that is the thing which is inconsistent with the freeness of that favour. Surely the beggar's looking on the money he has in his hands, as a sign of the kindness of him who gave it to him, is in no respect inconsistent with the freeness of that kindness. It is his having money in his hands as the price of a benefit, that is the thing which is inconsistent with the free kindness of the giver. The notion of the freeness of the grace of God to sinners, as that is revealed and taught in the gospel, is not that no holy and amiable qualifications or actions in us shall be a fruit, and so a sign of that grace; but that it is not the worthiness or loveliness of any qualification or action of ours which recommends us to that grace; that kindness is shown to the unworthy and unlovely; that there is great excellency in the benefit bestowed, and no excellency in the subject as the price of it; that goodness goes forth and flows out, from the fulness of God's nature, the fulness of the fountain of good, without any amiableness in the object to draw it. And this is the notion of justification with-

out works, (as this doctrine is taught in the Scripture,) that it is not the worthiness or loveliness of our works, or any thing in us, which is in any wise accepted with God, as a balance for the guilt of sin, or a recommendation of sinners to his acceptance as heirs of life. Thus we are justified only by the righteousness of Christ, and not by our righteousness. And when works are opposed to faith in this affair, and it is said that we are justified by faith and not by works; thereby is meant that it is not the worthiness or amiableness of our works, or any thing in us, which recommends us to an interest in Christ and his benefits; but that we have this interest only by faith, or by our souls receiving Christ, or adhering to, and closing with him. But that the worthiness or amiableness of nothing in us recommends and brings us to an interest in Christ, is no argument that nothing in us is a sign of an interest in Christ.

If the doctrines of free grace, and justification by faith alone, be inconsistent with the importance of holy practice as a sign of grace; then they are equally inconsistent with the importance of any thing whatsoever in us as a sign of grace, any holiness, or any grace that is in us, or any of our experiences or religion; for it is as contrary to the doctrines of free grace and justification by faith alone, that any of these should be the righteousness by which we are justified, as that holy practice should be so. It is with holy works as it is with holy qualifications; it is inconsissent with the freeness of gospel grace, that a title to salvation should be given to men for the loveliness of any of their holy qualifications, as much as that it should be given for the holiness of their works. It is inconsistent with the gospel doctrine of free grace,

that an interest in Christ and his benefits should be given for the loveliness of a man's true holiness, for the aimableness of his renewed, sanctified, heavenly heart, his love to God, and being like God, or his experience of joy in the Holy Ghost, self-emptiness, a spirit to exalt Christ above all, and to give all glory to him, and a heart devoted unto him; I say, it is inconsistent with the gospel doctrine of free grace, that a title to Christ's benefits should be given out of regard to the loveliness of any of these, or that any of these should be our righteousness in the affair of justification. And yet this does not hinder the importance of these things as evidences of an interest in Christ. Just so it is with respect to holy actions and works. To make light of works, because we be not justified by works, is the same thing in effect as to make light of all religion, all grace and holiness, yea, true evangelical holiness, and all gracious experience; for all is included, when the Scripture says, We are not justified by works; for by works in this case is meant, all our own righteousness, religion, or holiness, and every thing that is in us; all the good we do, and all the good of which we are conscious; all external acts, and all internal acts and exercises of grace, and all experiences, and all those holy and heavenly things wherein the life and power, and the very essence of religion consist; all those great things which Christ and his apostles mainly insisted on in their preaching, and endeavoured to promote, as of the greatest consequence in the hearts and lives of men; and all good dispositions, exercises and qualifications of every kind whatsoever; and even faith itself, considered as a part of our holiness. For we are justified by none

of these things; and if we were, we should, in a Scripture sense, be justified by works.—And therefore, if it be not legal, and contrary to the evangelical doctrine of justification without works, to insist on any of these, as of great importance, as evidence of an interest in Christ; then no more is it thus, to insist on the importance of holy practice. It would be legal to suppose, that holy practice justifies by bringing us to a title to Christ's benefits, as the price of it, or as recommending to it by its preciousness or excellence; but it is not legal to suppose, that holy practice justifies the sincerity of a believer, as the proper evidence of it. The apostle James did not think it legal to say, that Abraham our father was justified by works, in this sense. The Spirit that indited the Scripture, did not think the great importance and absolute necessity of holy practice, in this respect to be inconsistent with the freeness of grace; for it commonly teaches them both together, as in Rev. xxi. God says, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely;" and then adds, in the very next words, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things."—As though behaving well in the Christian race and warfare were the condition of the promise. So in next chapter, Christ says, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the city;" and then declares in the 15th verse, how they that are of a wicked practice shall be excluded; and yet, in the verses next following, does with very great solemnity give forth an invitation to all to come and take of the water of life freely: "I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning star. And the

Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." But then it is added, in the next words, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne." And in that great invitation of Christ, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Christ adds in the next words, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light:" as though taking the burden of Christ's service, and imitating his example, were necessary in order to the promised rest. So in that great invitation to sinners to accept of free grace: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price;" even there in the continuation of the same invitation, the sinner's forsaking his wicked practice is spoken of as necessary to the obtaining mercy—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." So the riches of divine grace, in the justification of sinners, is set forth with the necessity of holy practice—"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless,

plead for the widow. Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." And in that most solemn invitation of Wisdom, Prov. ix. after it is represented what great provision is made, and how that all things were ready, the house built, the beasts killed, the wine mingled, and the table furnished, and the messengers sent forth to invite the guests; then we have the free invitation: "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither; as for him that wanteth understanding," (that is, has no righteousness,) "she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled." But then, in the next breath it follows—"Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding:" as though forsaking sin, and going in the way of holiness, were necessary in order to life. So that the freeness of grace, and the necessity of holy practice, which are thus from time to time joined together in Scripture, are not inconsistent one with another. Nor does it at all diminish the honour and importance of faith, that the exercises and effects of faith in practice should be esteemed the chief signs of it; any more than it lessens the importance of life, that action and motion are esteemed the chief signs of it.

So that in what has been said of the importance of holy practice, as the main sign of sincerity, there is nothing legal; nothing derogatory to the freedom and sovereignty of gospel grace; nothing in the least clashing with the gospel doctrine of justification by faith alone, without the works of the law; nothing in the least tending to lessen the glory of the Mediator, and our dependence on his righteousness; nothing

infringing on the special prerogatives of faith in the work of our salvation; nothing in any wise detracting from the glory of God and his mercy, or exalting man, or diminishing his dependence and obligation. So that if any are against such an importance being given to holy practice as has been spoken of, it must be only from a senseless aversion to the letters and sound of the word *works;* when there is no reason in the world to be given for it, but what may be given with equal force why they should have an aversion to the words, *holiness*, *godliness*, *grace*, *religion*, *experience*, and even *faith* itself; for to make a righteousness of any of these, is as legal, and as inconsistent with the way of the new covenant, as to make a righteousness of holy practice.

It is greatly to the hurt of religion, for persons to make light of, and insist little on, those things which the Scripture insist most upon, as of most importance in the evidence of our interest in Christ, under a notion that to lay weight on these things is legal, and an old covenant way; and so, to neglect the exercises, and effectual operations of grace in practice, and insist almost wholly on discoveries, and the method and manner of the immanent exercises of conscience and grace in contemplation; depending on an ability to make nice distinctions in these matters, and a faculty of accurate discerning in them, from philosophy or experience. It is in vain to seek for any better, or any farther signs than those that the Scriptures have most expressly mentioned, and most frequently insisted on, as signs of godliness. They who pretend to a greater accuracy in giving signs, or by their extraordinary experience or insight into the

nature of things, to give more distinguishing marks, which shall more thoroughly search out, and detect the hypocrite, are but subtle to darken their own minds, and the minds of others; their refinings and nice discerning are in God's sight but refined foolishness and a sagacious delusion. Here are applicable those words of Agur, "Every word of God is pure; he is a shield to them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." Our wisdom and discerning, with regard to the hearts of men, is not much to be trusted. We can see but a little way into the nature of the soul, and the depths of man's heart. The ways are so many whereby a person's affections may be moved without any supernatural influence, the natural springs of the affections are so various and so secret, so many things have oftentimes a joint influence on the affections, the imagination, (and that in ways innumerable and unsearchable,) natural temper, education, the common influences of the Spirit of God, a surprising concourse of affecting circumstances, an extraordinary coincidence of things in the course of men's thoughts, together with the subtle management of invisible malicious spirits; that no philosophy or experience will ever be sufficient to guide us safely through this labyrinth and maze, without our closely following the clue which God has given us in his word. God knows his own reasons why he insists on some things, and plainly sets them forth as the things by which we should try ourselves, rather than others. It may be it is because he knows that these things are attended with less perplexity, and that we are less liable to be deceived by them

than others. He best knows our nature; and he knows the nature and manner of his own operations: and he best knows the way of our safety; he knows what allowances to make for different states of his church, and different tempers of particular persons, and varieties in the manner of his own operations, how far nature may resemble grace, and how far nature may be mixed with grace, what affections may rise from imagination, and how far imagination may be mixed with spiritual illumination. And therefore it is our wisdom not to take his work out of his hands, but to follow him, and lay the stress of the judgment of ourselves there where he has directed us. If we do otherwise, no wonder if we are bewildered, confounded, and fatally deluded. But if we had got into the way of looking chiefly at those things which Christ, and his apostles, and prophets, chiefly insisted on, and in judging of ourselves and others, chiefly regarding practical exercises and effects of grace, not neglecting other things, it would be of manifold happy consequence; it would, above all things, tend to the conviction of deluded hypocrites, and to prevent the delusion of those whose hearts were never brought to a thorough compliance with the strait and narrow way which leads to life; it would tend to deliver us from innumerable perplexities, arising from the various inconsistent schemes there are about methods and steps of experience; it would greatly tend to prevent professors neglecting strictness of life, and tend to promote their engagedness and earnestness in their Christian walk; and it would become fashionable for men to show their Christianity, more by an amiable, distinguished be-

haviour, than by an abundant and excessive declaring their experiences; and we should get into the way of appearing lively in religion, more by being lively in the service of God and our generation, than by the liveliness and forwardness of our tongues, and making a business of proclaiming on the house-tops, with our mouths, the holy and eminent acts and exercises of our own hearts; and Christians, that are intimate friends, would talk together of their experiences and comforts, in a manner better becoming Christian humility and modesty, and more to each other's profit; their tongues not running before, but rather going behind, their hands and feet, after the prudent example of the blessed apostle—" For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me:" and many occasions of spiritual pride would be cut off; and so a great door shut against the devil; and a great many of the main stumbling-blocks against experimental and powerful religion would be declared and manifested in such a way, that instead of hardening spectators, and exceedingly promoting infidelity and atheism, would, above all things, tend to convince men that there is a reality in religion, and greatly awaken them, and win them, by convincing their consciences of the importance and excellency of religion. Thus the light of professors would so shine before men, that others, seeing their good works, would glorify their Father who is in heaven.

APPENDIX.

TWO LETTERS TO MR. GILLESPIE,

IN REPLY TO HIS OBJECTIONS TO SOME THINGS IN THE PRECEDING TREATISE.

LETTER I.

Northampton, Sept. 4, 1747.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

I RECEIVED your letter of Nov. 24, 1746, though very long after it was written. I thank you for it, and for your offering me a correspondence with you. Such an offer I shall gladly embrace, and esteem it a great privilege, more especially from the character I have received of you from Mr. Abercrombie, who I perceive was intimately acquainted with you.

As to the objections you make against some things contained in my late book on Religious Affections, I am sorry you did not read the book through before you made them: if you had, perhaps the difficulties would not have appeared quite so great. As to what is contained in the 197th and 198th pages, I suppose there is not the least difference of opinion between you and me, unless it be concerning the signification and propriety of expression. I am fully of your mind, and always was without the least doubt of it, "That every one, both saint and sinner, is indispensably bound, at all seasons, by the divine authority, to believe instantly on the Lord Jesus, and that the command of the Lord, 1 John iii. 23. that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, as it is a prescription of the moral law, no less binds the sinner to immediate performance, than the commandment not to kill, to keep the Sabbath-day, or any other duty, as to the *present* performance of which, in way of duty, all agree the sinner is bound; and that men are bound to trust the divine faithfulness, be their case, with respect to light and darkness, sight, &c. what it will; and that no situation they can be in looses them from obligation to glorify the Lord at all seasons, and expecting the fulfilment of his words; and that the sinner that is without spiritual light or sight is bound to believe, and that it is a duty *at that very time* incumbent on him to believe." But I conceive that there is a great deal of difference between these two things, namely, it being a man's duty that is without spiritual light or sight, to believe, and its being his duty to believe without spiritual light or sight,

or to believe while he yet remains without light or sight. Just the same difference that is between these two things, namely, its being *his* duty that has no faith to believe, and its being his duty to believe without faith, or to believe without believing. I trust there is none will assert the latter, because of the contradiction that it implies. As it is not proper to say, It is a man's duty to believe without faith, because it implies a contradiction, so I think it equally improper to say, It is a man's duty to believe without these things that are essentially implied in faith, because that also implies a contradiction. But a spiritual sight of Christ, or knowledge of Christ, is essentially implied in the very nature and notion of faith; and, therefore, it is absurd to talk of believing on Christ without spiritual light or sight. It is the duty of a man that is without these things, that essentially belong to faith, to believe; and it is the duty of a man that is without these things, that essentially belong to love, to love God; because it is an indispensable obligation that lies on all men, at all times, and in all circumstances, to love God: but yet it is not a duty to love God without loving him, or continuing without those things that essentially belong to his love. It is the duty of those that have no sense of the loveliness of God, and have no esteem of him, to love him, and they be not in the least excused by the want of this sense and esteem, in not loving him one moment; but yet it would be properly nonsense to say it is their duty to love him without any sense of his loveliness, or any esteem of him. It is indeed their duty this moment to come out of their disesteem and stupid, wicked insensibility of his loveliness, and to love him. I made the distinction (I thought) very plainly, in the midst of those sentences you quote as exceptionable. I say expressly, page 198, "It is truly the duty of those who are in darkness, to come out of darkness into light, and believe; but, that they should confidently believe and trust, while they yet remain without spiritual light or sight, is an antiscriptural and absurd doctrine." The misunderstanding between us, dear Sir, I suppose to be in the different application of the particle *without*, in my use of it, and your understanding of it, or what we understand as spoken of and supposed in the expression; *without spiritual light or sight*. As I use it, I apply it to the act of believing; and I suppose it to be very absurd to talk of an act of faith *without* spiritual light and sight, wherein I suppose you will allow me to be in the right. As you understand it, it is applied to duty or obligation, and you suppose it to be not at all absurd to talk of an obligation to believe without spiritual light or sight, but that the obligation remains full where there is no spiritual light or sight, wherein I allow you are in the right. I think, Sir, if you read what I have said in my book on this head again, it will be exceedingly apparent to you, that it is thus that I apply the preposition *without*, and not as you before understood it. I thought I had very plainly manifested that what I meant by *being in darkness* was a being in spiritual blindness, and so in a dead, stupid, carnal, and unchristian frame and way, and not what is commonly called a being without the light of God's countenance,

under the hidings of his face. We have a great number of people in these parts that go on that supposition in their notions and practice, that there really is such a thing as such a manner of believing, such a kind of faith as this, namely, a confident believing and firm trusting in God in the dark, in the sense mentioned, that is to be sought after, and is the subject matter of divine prescription, and which many actually have; and indeed there are innumerable instances of such as are apparently in a most senseless, careless, negligent, apostate, and every way unchristian and wicked frame, that yet, encouraged by this principle, do retain an exceeding strong confidence of their good state, and count that herein they do their duty and give much glory to God, under the notion of trusting God in the dark, and hoping against hope, and not trusting on their own righteousness; and they suppose it would show a legal spirit to do otherwise. I thought it would be manifest to every reader that I was arguing against such a sort of people.

You say, "It merits consideration whether the believer should ever doubt of his state, on any account whatever, because doubting, as opposed to believing, is absolutely sinful." Here, Sir, you seem to suppose that a person's doubting of his own good estate is the proper opposite of faith, and these and some other expressions in your letter, seem to suppose that doubting of one's good estate and unbelief is the same thing, and so, that being confident of one's good estate and faith are the same thing. This I acknowledge I do not understand; I do not take faith, and a persons believing that they have faith, to be the same thing. Nor do I take unbelief, or being without faith, and doubting whether they have it, to be the same thing, but entirely different. I should have been glad either that you had taken a little more notice of what I say on this head, pages 199, 200. or that you had said something to convince me that I am wrong in this point. *The exercise of faith is doubtless the way to be delivered from darkness, deadness, backsliding, &c.* or rather is the deliverance; as forsaking sin is the way to deliverance from sin, and is the deliverance itself. The exercise of grace is doubtless the way to deliverance from a graceless frame, that consists in the want of the exercise of grace. But as to what you say, or seem to intimate, of a person's being confident of his own good estate, as being the way to be delivered from darkness, deadness, backsliding, and prevailing iniquity, I think, whoever supposes this to be God's method of delivering his saints, when sunk into an evil, careless, carnal, and unchristian frame, first to assure them of their good estate and his favour, while they yet remain in such a frame, and to make *that* the means of their deliverance, does surely mistake God's method of dealing with such persons. Among all the multitudes I have had opportunity to observe, I never knew one dealt with after this manner. I have known many brought back from great declension, that appeared to me to be true saints; but it was in a way very diverse from this. In the first place, conscience has been awakened, and they have been brought into great fear of the wrath of God, having his favour hid, and they have been the sub-

jects of a kind of new work of humiliation, brought to a great sense of their deserving of God's wrath, even while they have yet feared it, before God has delivered them from the apprehension of it, and comforted them with a renewed sense of his favour.

As to what I say of the necessity of universal obedience, or of one way of known sin (that is, so as properly to be said to be the way and manner of the man) being exception enough against a man's salvation; I should have known better what to have said further about it, if you had briefly shown how the Scriptures that I mention, and the arguments I deduce from them, are insufficient for the proof of this point. I confess they appear to me to prove it as fully as any thing concerning the necessary qualifications of a true saint can be proved from Scripture.

You object against my saying, p. 523, "Nor can a true saint ever fall away, so that it shall come to this, that ordinarily there shall be no remarkable difference in his walk and behaviour since his conversion, from what was before." This, I think, implies no more than that his walk over the same ground, in like circumstances, and under like trials, will have a remarkable difference. As to the instance you mention of David and Solomon, I do not know that the Scriptures give us any where so much of a history of their walk and behaviour before their conversion, as to put us into any proper capacity of comparing their after walk with their former. These examples are uncertain. But I think those doctrines of the Scripture are not uncertain, which I mention in the place you cite, to confirm the point, which teach that converts are new men, new creatures, that they are renewed not only within but without, that old things are passed away, and all things become new, that they walk in newness of life, that the members of their bodies are new, that whereas they before were the servants of sin, and yielded their members servants of iniquity, now they yield them servants of righteousness unto holiness.

As to those doubts and cases of difficulty you mention, I should think it very needless for a divine of your character to apply to me for a solution of difficulties, which it would be more proper for me to learn of you. However, since you are pleased to insist on my giving my mind upon them, I would observe, as to the first case you mention, of a person incessantly harassed by Satan, &c. you do not say of what nature the temptations are that he is harassed with. But I think it impossible to give proper advice and direction without knowing this. Satan is to be resisted in a very different manner, in different kinds of onsets. When persons are harassed with those strange, horrid injections, that melancholic persons are often subject to, he is to be resisted in a very different manner, from what is proper in case of violent temptation to gratify some worldly lust. In the former case, I should by no means advise a person to resist the devil by entering the lists with him, and vehemently engaging their mind in an earnest dispute and violent struggle with the grand adversary, but rather by diverting the mind from his frightful suggestions, by going on steadfastly and diligently in the ordinary course of duty,

without allowing themselves time and leisure to attend to the devil's sophistry, or viewing his frightful representations, committing themselves to God by prayer in this way, without anxiety about what had been suggested. That is the best way of resisting the devil, that crosses his design most; and he more effectually disappoints him in such cases, that treats him with neglect, than he that attends so much to him, as to engage in a direct conflict, and goes about to try his strength and skill with him, in a violent dispute or combat. The latter course rather gives him advantage than any thing else. It is what he would; if he can get persons thus engaged in a violent struggle, he gains a great point. He knows that melancholic persons are not fit for it. By this he gains that point of diverting and taking off the person from the ordinary course of duty, which is one great thing he aims at; and by this, having gained the person's attention to what he says, he has opportunity to use all his craft and subtlety, and by this struggle he raises melancholic vapours to a greater degree, and further weakens the person's mind, and gets him faster and faster in his snares, deeper and deeper in the mire. He increases the person's anxiety of mind, which is the very thing by which mainly he fulfils all his purposes with such persons.

Concerning the other difficulty you mention relating to the verifying of Rom. viii. 20. "All things shall work together for good," &c. in a saint that falls under backsliding and spiritual decays, &c. it seems to be a matter of some difficulty to understand exactly how this is to be taken, and how far it may from hence be inferred, that the temptations the saints meet with from Satan and an evil world, and their own declensions and sins, shall surely work for their good. However, since you desire my thoughts, I would express them, such as they are, as follows:—

In order rightly to state this matter, there are two things may be laid down, as positions of certain and indubitable truth concerning this doctrine of the apostle.

First, The meaning cannot be that God's dispensations and disposals towards each saint are the best for him, most tending to his happiness *of all that are possible:* or that all things that are ordered for him, or done by God with respect to him, are in all respects better for him than any thing else that God could have ordered or done, issuing in the highest good and happiness that it is possible he should be brought to; for that would be as much as to say, that God will bestow on every one of his elect, as much happiness as he can [confer,] in the utmost exercise of his omnipotence, and this sets aside all these different degrees of grace and holiness here, and glory hereafter, which he bestows according to his sovereign pleasure.

All things may work together for good to the saints. All may be of benefit to them, and may have a concurring tendency to their happiness, and may all finally issue in it, and yet not tend to, or issue in the highest degree of good and happiness possible. There is a certain measure of holiness and happiness, that each

one of the elect is eternally appointed to, and all things that relate to him, work together to bring to pass *this appointed measure of good.* The text and context speak of God's *eternal purpose* of good to the elect, predestinating them to a conformity to his Son in holiness and happiness; and the implicit reasoning of the apostle leads us to suppose that all things will purely concur to bring to effect God's eternal purpose. And therefore, from his reasoning it may be inferred, that all things will tend to, and work together to bring to pass, that degree of good that God has purposed to bestow upon them, and not any more. And indeed it would be in itself unreasonable to suppose any thing else but this; inasmuch as God is the supreme orderer of all things, doubtless all things shall be so ordered, that with one consent, they shall help to bring to pass his ends, aims, and purposes; but surely not to bring to pass what he does not aim at, and never intended. God, in his government of the world, is carrying on his own designs in every thing; but he is not carrying on that which is not his design, and therefore there is no need of supposing, that all the circumstances, means, and advantages of every saint, are the best, in every respect, that God could have ordered for him, or that there could have been no circumstances or means that he could have been the subject of, that would, with God's usual blessing, have issued in his greater good. Every saint, is, as it were, a living stone, that in this present state of preparation, is fitting for the place appointed for him in the heavenly temple. And in this sense all things undoubtedly work together for good to every one that is called according to God's purpose. He is, all the while he lives in this world, by all the dispensations of providence towards him, fitting for the particular mansion in glory, that is appointed and prepared for him, or hewing for his appointed place in the heavenly building.

Secondly, Another thing which is no less certain and demonstrable than the position that has been already laid down, and indeed follows from it, is this, When it is said, "all things work together for good," &c. hereby cannot be intended that all things *both positive and negative, are best for them,* or that it is so universally, that not only every positive thing, that the saints are the subjects of, or are concerned in, will work for their good, but also that when any thing is absent or withheld from them by God in his providence, that absence or withholding is also for their good in that sense, or to be better for them than the presence or bestowment would have been; for this would have the same absurd consequence that was mentioned before, namely, That God makes every saint as happy as he possibly can. And, besides, if so, it would follow that God's withholding greater degrees of the sanctifying influences of his Spirit is for the saints' good, and that it is best for them to live and die so low in grace as they do, which would be as much as to say, that it is for their good to have no more good, or that it is for their happiness to have no more happiness here and hereafter. If we take good notice of the apostle's discourse in Rom. viii. it will be apparent

that his words imply no such thing. All God's creatures, and all that God does in disposing of them, is for the good of the saint. But it will not hence follow, that all God's forbearing to do is also for his good, or that it is best for him, that God does no more for him.

Therefore, the following things I humbly conceive to be the truth, concerning the sins and temptations of the saints being for their good.

1. That all things, whatsoever, are for the good of the saints, things negative as well as positive, in this sense, that *God intends that some benefit to them shall arise from every thing*, so that something of the grace and love of God will hereafter be seen to have been exercised towards them in every thing. At the same time, the sovereignty of God will also be seen, with regard to the measure of the good or benefit aimed at, in that some other things, if God had seen cause to order them, would have produced a higher benefit. And with regard to negative disposals, consisting not in God's doing, but forbearing to do, not in giving, but withholding, some benefit in some respect or other, will ever accrue to the saints, even from these; though sometimes the benefit will not be equal to the benefit withheld, if it had been bestowed. As, for instance, when a saint lives and dies comparatively low in grace. There is some good improvement shall be made, even of this, in the eternal state of the saint, whereby he shall receive a real benefit, though the benefit shall not be equal to the benefit of a higher degree of holiness, if God had bestowed it.

2. God carries on a design of love to his people, and to each individual saint, not only in all things that they are the subjects of while they live, but also in all his works and disposals, and in all his acts from eternity to eternity.

3. That the sin, in general, of the saints, is for their good, and for the best in this respect, namely, that it is a thing that, through the sovereign grace of God, and his infinite wisdom, will issue in a high advancement of their eternal happiness, that they have been sinful, fallen creatures, and not from the beginning perfectly innocent and holy, as the elect angels; and that they shall obtain some additional good on occasion of all the sin they have been the subjects of, or have committed, beyond what they would have had, if they never had been fallen creatures.

4. The sin of the saints in this sense cannot be for their good, that it would finally be best for them, that while they lived in this world, their restoration and recovery from the corruption they became subject to by the fall, was no greater, the mortification of sin, and spiritual vivification of their soul carried on to no greater degree, that they remained so deficient, as to love to God, Christian love to men, humility, heavenly-mindedness, and that they were so barren, and did so few good works, and, consequently, that, in general, they had so much sin, and of the exercises of it, and not more holiness, and of the exercises and fruits of that, for in proportion as one of these is more, the other will

be less, as infallibly, as darkness is more or less, in proportion to the diminution or increase of light. It cannot finally be better for the saints, that, in general, while they live, they had so much sin of heart and life, rather than more holiness of heart and life. Because the reward of all at last will be according to their works, and he that sowed sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he that sowed bountifully shall reap also bountifully, and he that builds wood, hay, and stubble, shall finally suffer loss, and have a less reward, than if he had built gold, silver, and precious stones, though he himself shall be saved. But notwithstanding this,

5. The sins and falls of the saints may be for their good, and for the better, in this respect, that the issue may be better than if the temptation had not happened, and so the occasion not given either for the sin of yielding to the temptation, or the virtue of overcoming it: and yet not in the respect (with regard to their sins or falls in general) that it should be better for them in the issue, that they have yielded to the temptation offered, than if they had overcome. For the fewer victories they obtain over temptation, the fewer are their good works, and particularly of that kind of good works to which a distinguished reward is promised in Rev. ii. and iii. and in many other parts of Scripture. The word of God represents the work of a Christian in this world as a warfare, and it is evident in the Scripture that he who acquits himself as the best soldier shall win the greatest prize. Therefore, when the saints are brought into backslidings and decays, by being overcome by temptation, the issue of their backslidings may be some good to them. They may receive some benefit by occasion of it, beyond what they would have received if that temptation had never prevailed, and yet their backslidings in general may be a great loss to them in the following respect, namely, That they shall have much less reward, than if the temptations had been overcome, and they notwithstanding had persevered in spiritual vigour and diligence. But yet this does not hinder, but that,

6. It may be so ordered by a sovereign and all-wise God, that the saints' falls and backslidings, through their being overcome by temptations in some particular instances, may prove best for them, not only in that the issue may be greater good to them, than they would have received if the temptation had not happened, but even greater in that instance, than if the temptation had been overcome. It may be so ordered that their being overcome by that temptation, shall be the occasion of their having greater strength, and on the whole, obtaining more and greater victories, than if they had not fallen in that instance. But this is no where promised, nor can it be so, that, in the general, it should prove better for them that they were foiled so much, and did overcome so little, in the course of their lives, and that finally their decay is so great, or their progress so small. From these things it appears,

7. That the saying of the apostle, " All things work together for good to them that love God," though it be fulfilled in some

respects to all saints, and at all times, and in all circumstances, yet it is fulfilled more especially and eminently to the saints *continuing in the exercise of love to God*, not falling from the exercises, or failing in the fruits of divine love in times of trial. Then it is, that temptations, enemies and suffering, will be best for them, working that which is most for their good every way, and they shall be more than conquerors over tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril and sword, Rom. viii. 35–37.

8. As God is carrying on a design of love to each individual saint, in all his works and disposals whatsoever, as was observed before, so the particular design of love to them that he is carrying on, is to fit them for, and bring them to their appointed place in the heavenly temple, or to that individual, precise happiness and glory in heaven, that his eternal love designed for them, and no other, (for God's design of love or of happiness to them, is only just what it is, and is not different from itself.) And to fulfil this particular design of love, every thing that God does, or in any respect disposes, whether it be positive, privative or negative, contributes, because doubtless every thing that God does, or in any respect offers, tends to fulfil his aims and designs. Therefore undoubtedly,

9. All the while the saint lives in the world, he is fitting for his appointed mansion in glory, and hewing for his place in the heavenly building. And all his temptations, though they may occasion, for the present, great spiritual wounds, yet at last, they shall be an occasion of his being more fitted for his place in glory. And, therefore, we may determine, that however the true saint may die in some respects, under decays, under the decay of comfort, and of the exercise of some religious affections, yet every saint died at that time when his habitual fitness for his place in the heavenly temple is most complete, because otherwise, all things that happen to him while he lives, would not work together to fit him for that place.

10. God brings his saints at the end of their lives to this greatest fitness for their place in heaven, not by diminishing grace in their hearts, but by increasing it, and carrying on the work of grace in their souls. If it be not so, that cannot be true, that where God *has begun a good work, he will perform it, or carry it on, to the day of Christ*, for if they die with a less degree of grace than they had before, then it ceases to be carried on before the day of Christ comes. If grace is finally diminished, then Satan so far finally obtains the victory. He finally prevails to diminish the fire in the smoking flax, and then how is that promise verified, that God "will not quench the smoking flax, till he bring forth judgment unto victory?" So that it must needs be, that although saints may die under decay in some respects, yet they never die under a real habitual decay of the work of grace in general. If they fall, they shall rise again, before they die, and rise higher than before, if not in joy, and some other affections, yet in greater degrees of spiritual knowledge, self-emptiness, trust in God, and solidity and ripeness of grace.

If these things that have been observed are true, then we may infer from them these corollaries:—

1st, That notwithstanding the truth of that saying of the apostle, Rom. viii. 28. the saints have cause to lament their leanness and barrenness, and that they are guilty of so much sin, not only as it is to the dishonour of God, but also as that which is like to be to their own eternal loss and damage.

2dly, That nothing can be inferred from the forementioned promise tending to set aside, or make void the influence of motives to earnest endeavours to avoid all sin, to increase in holiness, and abound in good in works, from an aim at a high and eminent degree of glory and happiness in the future world.

3dly, That though it is to the eternal damage of the saints, ordinarily, when they yield to, and are overcome by temptations, yet Satan and other enemies of the saints by whom these temptations come, are always wholly disappointed in their temptation, and baffled in their design to hurt the saints, inasmuch as the temptation and the sin that comes by it, is for the saints' good, and they receive a greater benefit in the issue, than if the temptation had not been, and yet less than if the temptation had been overcome.

As to Mr. Boston's "View of the Covenant of Grace," I have had some opportunity with it, and I confess I did not understand his scheme delivered in that book. I have read his "Fourfold State of Man," and liked it exceeding well. I think he herein shows himself to be a truly great divine.

Hoping that you will accept my letter with candour, and remember me in your prayers, I subscribe myself

Your affectionate and obliged Brother and Servant,

JONATHAN EDWARDS.

LETTER II.

Northampton, April 2, 1750.

Rev. & Dear Sir,

I received your favour of September 19, 1748, the last summer, and would now heartily thank you for it. I suppose it might come in the same ship with letters I had from my other correspondents in Scotland, which I answered the last summer; but it did not come to hand till a long time after most of the others, and after I had finished and sent away my answers to them, and that opportunity for answering was past. I have had no leisure or opportunity to write any letters to Scotland from that time till now, by reason of my peculiar and very extraordinary circumstances on account of the controversy that has arisen between me and my people, concerning the profession that ought to be

made by persons that come to Christian sacraments, which is likely speedily to issue in a separation between me and my congregation. This controversy, in the progress of it, has proved not only a controversy between me and my people, but between me and a great part of New England; there being many far and near that are warmly engaged in it. This affair has unavoidably engaged my mind, and filled up my time, and taken me off from other things. I need the prayers of my friends, that God would be with me, and direct and assist me in such a time of trial, and mercifully order the issue.

As to the epistolary controversy, dear Sir, between you and me, about FAITH and DOUBTING, I am sorry it should *seem* to be greater than it is, through misunderstanding of one another's meaning, and that the *real* difference between us is so great as it is, in some part of the controversy.

As to the dispute about believing without spiritual light or sight, I thought I expressed my meaning in my last letter very plainly, but I kept no copy, and it might, perhaps, be owing to my dulness that I thought so. However, I perceive I was not understood. I cannot find out by any thing you say to me on this head, that we really differ in sentiments, but only in words. I acknowledge with you that "all are bound to believe the divine testimony, and trust in Christ, and that want of spiritual light or sight does not loose from the obligation one is laid under by the divine command, to believe instantly on Christ, and at all seasons, nor excuse him, in any degree, for not believing. Even when one wants the influence and grace of the Spirit, still he is bound to believe. Ability is not the rule of duty." I think the obligation to believe, lies on a person *who is remaining without spiritual light or sight,* or even in darkness. No darkness, no blindness, no carnality or stupidity, excuses him a moment from having as strong and lively faith and love as ever was exercised by the apostle Paul, or rather renders it not sinful in him that he is at that same moment without such a faith and love;—and yet I believe it is absurd, and of very hurtful consequences, to urge persons to believe in the dark, in the manner and in the sense in which many hundreds have done in America, who plainly intend a believing strongly with such a sort of strong faith or great confidence as is consistent with continuing still, even in the time of these strong acts of faith, without spiritual light; carnal, stupid, careless, and senseless. Their doctrine evidently comes to this, both in sense and effect, that it is a mere duty strongly to believe with a lightless and sightless faith, or to have a confident, although a blind, dark, and stupid faith. And such a faith has indeed been promoted exceedingly, by their doctrine, and has prevailed with its dreadful effects, answerable to the nature of the cause. We have had, and have to this day, multitudes of such strong believers, whose bold, proud, and stupid confidence, attended with a very wicked behaviour, has given the greatest wound to the cause of truth and vital religion that ever it suffered in America.

As to what follows in your letter, concerning a person's believing himself to be in a good state, and its being properly of the nature of faith; in this there seems to be some real difference between us. But, perhaps, there would be none, if distinctness were well observed in the use of words. If by a man's believing that he is in a good estate, be meant no more than his believing that he does believe in Christ, does love God, &c. I think there is nothing of the nature of faith in it; because knowing it, or believing it, depends on our own immediate sensation or consciousness, and not on divine testimony. True believers, in the hope they entertain of salvation, make use of the following syllogism, *Whosoever believes shall be saved: I believe, therefore*, &c. Assenting to the major proposition is properly of the nature of faith, because the ground of my assent to that is divine testimony; but my assent to the minor proposition, I humbly conceive, is not of the nature of faith, because that is not grounded on divine testimony, but my own consciousness. The testimony that is the proper ground of faith, is in the word of God, Rom. x. 17. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." There is such a testimony given us in the word of God, that "He that believeth shall be saved." But there is no such testimony in the word of God, as that such an individual person, in such a town in Scotland or New England, believes. There is such a proposition in the Scripture, as that "Christ loves those that love him," and therefore, this every one is bound to believe and affirm: believing this on divine testimony is properly of the nature of faith, and for any one to doubt of it, is properly the heinous sin of unbelief. But there is no such proposition in the Scripture, nor is it any part of the gospel of Christ, that such an individual person in Northampton loves Christ. If I know that I have complacence in Christ, I know it the same way that I know I have complacence in my wife and children, namely, by the testimony of my own heart or inward consciousness. Evangelical faith has the gospel of Christ for its foundation; but that I love Christ, is a proposition not contained in the gospel of Christ.

And therefore, that we may not dispute in the dark, it is necessary that we should explain what we mean by a person's believing he is in a good estate. If thereby we mean only believing the minor of the foregoing syllogism, or such like syllogisms, I believe or I love God, it is not in the nature of faith. But if by a man's believing himself to be in a good estate, be understood his believing not only the minor, but the consequence, *Therefore I shall be saved*, or *therefore God will never leave me nor forsake me;* then a man's believing his good estate, partakes of the nature of faith; for these consequences depend on divine testimony in the word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Yea, I would observe farther, that a man's judging of the faith or love he finds in himself, whether they are that sort of faith and love which he finds to be saving, may depend on his reliance on Scripture rules and marks, which are divine testimonies, which he

may be tempted not to rely upon, from the consideration of his great unworthiness. But his judging that he has those individual inward acts of understanding, and exercises of heart, depends on inward sensations, and not on any testimony of the word of God. The knowing present acts depends on immediate consciousness, and the knowing past acts depends on memory. And therefore the fulness of my satisfaction, that I now have such an inward act or exercise of mind, depends on the strength of sensation; and my satisfaction, that I have had them heretofore, depends on the clearness of my memory, and not on the strength of my reliance on any divine testimony; and so my doubting whether I have, or have had, such individual inward acts, is not of the nature of unbelief, though it may arise from unbelief *indirectly;* because, if I had had more faith, the actings of it would have been more sensible, and the memory of them more clear, and so I should have been better satisfied that I had them.

God seems to have given Abraham's servant a revelation, that the damsel in whom he found such marks, namely, coming to draw water with a pitcher to that well, her readiness to give him and his camels drink, &c. should be Isaac's wife, and therefore his assenting to *this* was of the nature of faith, having divine testimony for its foundation. But his believing that Rebekah was the damsel that had these individual marks, his knowing that she came to draw water, and that she let down her pitcher, &c. was not of the nature of faith His knowing *this* was not from divine testimony, but from the testimony of his own senses.—(Vide Gen. xxiv.)

You speak of "a saint's doubting of his good estate as a part of unbelief, and the opposite of faith, considered in its full compass and latitude, as one branch of unbelief, one ingredient in unbelief; and of assurance of a man's good estate, as one thing that belongs to the exercise of faith." I do not know whether I take your meaning in these expressions. If you mean, that a person's believing himself to be in a good estate is one thing that appertains to the essence of saving faith, or that saving faith, in all that belongs to its essence, yea its perfection, cannot be without implying it, I must humbly ask leave to differ from you. That a believing that I am in a good estate, is no part or ingredient in the essence of saving faith, is evident by this, that the essence of saving faith must be complete in me, before it can be true, that I am in a good estate. If I have not as yet acted faith, yea, if there be any thing wanting in me to make up the essence of saving faith, then I am not, as yet, in a state of salvation, and therefore can have no ground to believe that I am so. Any thing that belongs to the essence of saving faith is prior, in the order of nature, to a man's being in a [believing] state of salvation, because it is saving faith that brings him into such a state. And therefore, believing that he is in such a state cannot be one thing that is essential or necessary in order to his being in such a state; for that would imply a contradiction. It would be to suppose a man's believing that he is in a good estate to be prior, in the order of nature, to his being in a good estate. But a thing

cannot be both prior and posterior, antecedent and consequent, with respect to the very same thing. The real truth of a proposition is in the order of nature first, before its being believed to be true. But till a man has already all that belongs to the essence of saving faith, that proposition, *that he is in a good* [believing] *estate*, is not, as yet, true. All the propositions contained in the gospel, all divine testimonies that we have in God's word, are true already, are already laid for a foundation for faith, and were laid long ago. But that proposition, *I am in a good estate*, not being one of them, is not true till I have first believed; and therefore this proposition cannot be believed to be true, till saving faith be first complete. Therefore the completeness of the act of saving faith will not make it take in a belief of this proposition, nor will the strength or perfection of the act cause it to imply this. If a man, in his first act of faith, has ever so great a conviction of God's sufficiency and faithfulness, and let his reliance on the divine testimony be ever so strong and perfect, all will have no tendency to make him believe this proposition, *I am in a good estate*, to be true, till it be true, which it is not till the first act of faith is complete, and has made it true. A belief of divine testimony in the first act of faith, may be to any assignable degree of strength and perfection, without believing that proposition, for there is no such divine testimony then extant, nor is there any such truth extant, but in consequence of the first act of faith. Therefore, (as I said,) saving faith may be, with all that belongs to its essence, and that in the highest perfection, without implying a belief of my own good estate. I do not say it can be without having this immediate *effect*. But it is rather the *effect* of faith, than a *part*, *branch*, or *ingredient* of faith. And so I do not dispute whether a man's doubting of his good state may be a consequence of unbelief, (I doubt not but it is in those who are in a good state;) because, if men had the exercise of faith in such a degree as they ought to have, it could not but be very sensible and plain that they had it. But yet I think this doubting of a good state is entirely a different thing from the sin of unbelief itself, and has nothing of the nature of unbelief in it; that is, if we take doubting one's good state in the sense in which I have before explained it, namely, for doubting whether I have such individual principles and acts in my soul. Take it in a complex sense, and it may have the sin of unbelief in it; for instance, If, although I doubt not that I have such and such qualifications, I yet doubt of those consequences, for which I have divine testimony or promise; as when a person doubts not that he loves Christ, yet doubts whether *he shall receive a crown of life*. The doubting of this consequence is properly the sin of unbelief.

You say, dear Sir, "The Holy Ghost requires us to believe the reality of his work in us in all its parts, just as it is;" and, a little before, "The believer's doubting whether or not he has faith is sinful; because it is belying the Holy Ghost, denying his

work in him, so there is no sin to which that doubting can so properly be reduced as unbelief."

Here I would ask leave thus to express my thoughts in a diversity from yours. I think, if it be allowed to be sinful for a believer to doubt whether he has faith, that this doubting is not the sin of unbelief on any such account as you mention, namely, as belying or denying any testimony of the Holy Ghost. There is a difference between doubting of the being of some *work* of the Holy Ghost, and denying the *testimony* of the Holy Ghost, as there is a difference between doubting concerning some other works of God, and denying the testimony of God. It is the work of God to give a man great natural abilities; and if we suppose God *requires* such a man *to believe the reality of his work in all its parts just as it is*, and so that it is sinful for him at all to doubt of his natural abilities being just as good as they are, yet this is no belying any testimony of God, though it be doubting of a work of God, and so is diverse from the sin of unbelief. So, if we suppose a very eminent saint is to blame in doubting whether he has so much grace as he really has; he indeed *does not believe the reality of God's work in him in all its parts, just as it is*, yet he is not therein guilty of the sin of unbelief, against any testimony of God, any more than the other.

I acknowledge that, for a true saint, in a carnal and careless frame, to doubt of his good state, is sinful, *more indirectly*, as the cause of it is sinful, namely, the lowness and insensibility of the actings of grace in him, and the prevalence of carnality and stupidity. It is sinful to be without assurance, or (as we say,) *it is his own fault*, he sinfully deprives himself of it; or foregoes it, as a servant's being without his tools is his sin, when he has carelessly lost them, or as it is his sin to be without strength of body, or without the sight of his eyes, when he has deprived himself of these by intemperance. Not that weakness or blindness of body, in their own nature, are sin; for they are qualities of the body, and not of mind, the subject in which sin is inherent. It is indirectly the duty of a true saint *always* to rejoice in the light of God's countenance, because sin is the cause of his being without this joy at any time; and therefore, it was *indirectly* David's sin that he was not rejoicing in the light of God's countenance, at that very time when he was committing the great iniquities of adultery and murder. But yet it is not directly a believer's duty to rejoice in the light of God's countenance, when God hides his face. But it rather then becomes him to be troubled and to mourn. So there are perhaps many other privileges of saints that are their duty indirectly, and the want of them is sinful, not simply, but complexly considered. Of this kind I take the want of assurance of my good estate to be.

I think no words of mine, either in my book or letter, implied that a person's deliverance from a bad frame, does not begin with renewed acts of faith or trusting in God. If they did, they implied what I never intended. Doubtless, if a saint comes out of an ill frame, wherein grace is asleep and inactive, it must be by

renewed actings of grace. It is very plainly impossible, that grace should begin to cease to be inactive, in any other way than by its beginning to be active. It must begin with the renewed actings of some grace or other; and I know nothing that I have said to the contrary, but that the grace that shall first begin sensibly to revive shall be faith, and that this shall lead the way to the renewed acting of all other graces, and to the farther acting of faith itself. But a person's coming out of a carnal, careless, dead frame, by, or in the reviving of grace in his soul, is quite another thing from a saint's having a strong exercise of faith, or strong hope, or strong exercise of any other grace, while yet remaining in a carnal, careless, dead frame; or, in other words, in a frame wherein grace is so far from being in strong exercise, that it is asleep, and in a great measure without exercise.

There is a *holy hope*, a truly *Christian hope*, that the Scripture speaks of, that is reckoned among the graces of the Spirit: and I think I should never desire or seek any other hope; for I believe no other hope has any holy or good tendency. Therefore *this* hope, *this* grace of hope alone, can properly be called a duty. But it is just as absurd to talk of the exercise of this holy hope, the strong exercise of this grace of the Spirit, in a carnal, stupid, careless frame, such *a frame yet remaining*, as it would be to talk of the strong exercises of love to God, or heavenly mindedness, or any other grace, remaining in such a frame. It is doubtless proper, earnestly to exhort those who are in such a frame to come out of it, in and by the strong exercises of all grace; but I should not think it proper to press a man earnestly to maintain strong hope, *notwithstanding* the prevailing and continuance of great carnality and stupidity, (which is plainly the case of the people I opposed.) For this is plainly to press people to an unholy hope, a strong hope that is no Christian grace, but strong and wicked presumption; and the promoting of this has most evidently been the effect of such a method of dealing with souls in innumerable multitudes of awful instances.

You seem, Sir, to suppose, that God's manner of dealing with his saints, *while in a secure and careless frame*, is *first* to give assurance of their good state *while they remain in such a frame*, and to make use of that assurance as a mean to bring them out of such a frame. Here, again, I must beg leave to differ from you, and to think, that none of the instances or texts you adduce from Scripture do at all prove the point. I think it is God's manner, first to awaken their consciences, and to bring them to reflect upon themselves, and to bring them to feel their own calamity, which they have brought upon themselves by so departing from God, (by which an end is put to their carelessness and security,) and again earnestly and carefully to seek God's face before they find him, and before God restores the comfortable and joyful sense of his favour; and I think this is abundantly evident both by Scripture and experience. You much insist on Jonah as a clear instance of the thing you lay down. You observe that he says, chap. ii. "I said, I am cast out of thy sight, yet will I look again toward thy holy temple." Ver. 5–7. "When

my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came in unto thee, even unto thine holy temple." You speak of these words as expressing an assurance of his good state and of God's favour; (I will not now dispute whether they do or not;) and you speak of this exercise of assurance, &c. as *his practice in an evil frame, and in a careless frame; for he slept securely in the sides of the ship*, manifesting *dismal security, awful carelessness in a carnal frame*. That Jonah was in a careless, secure frame, when he was asleep in the sides of the ship, I do not deny. But, dear Sir, does that prove that he remained still in a careless, secure frame, when in his heart he said these things in the fish's belly? chap. ii. 4–7. does it prove that he remained careless after he was awakened, and saw the furious storm, and owned it was the fruit of God's anger towards him for his sins? and does it prove that he still remained careless after the whale had swallowed him, when he seemed to himself to be "in the belly of hell?" when "the water compassed him about, even to the soul," and, as he says, "all God's waters and billows passed over him, and he was ready to despair when he went down to the bottoms of the mountains," was ready to think God had cast him out of his sight, and confined him in a prison, that he could never escape, "the earth with her bars was about him for ever, and his soul fainted within him?" He was brought into *this* condition *after* his sleeping securely in the sides of the ship, *before* he said, "I will look again towards thine holy temple," &c. He was evidently first awakened out of carelessness and security, and brought into distress, before he was comforted.

The other place you also much insist on, concerning the people of Israel, is very much like this. Before God comforted them with the testimonies of his favour, after their backslidings, he first by severe chastisements, together with the awakening influences of his Spirit, brought them out of their *carelessness* and carnal *security*. It appears, by many scriptures, that this was God's way of dealing with that people. So Hos. chap. ii. God first "hedged up her ways with thorns, and made a wall that she could not find her paths. And took away her corn and wine, and wool and flax, destroyed her vines and fig-trees, and caused her mirth to cease;" and, by this means, brought her to herself, brought her out of her security, carelessness, and deep sleep, very much as the prodigal son was brought to himself: God "brought her first into the wilderness, before he spake comfortably to her, and opened to her a door of hope." By her distress first brought her to say, "I will go and return to my first husband;" and then, when God spake comfortably to her, she called him, "*Ishi*, my husband;" and God did as it were renewedly betroth her unto him. That passage, Hos. ii. is very parallel with Jer. iii. One place serves well to illustrate and explain the other, and that it was God's way of dealing with his people Israel, after their apostacy and carnal security, *first* to awaken them, and under a sense of their sin and misery, to bring them solicitously to seek his face, before he gave them sensible evidence of his favour; and

not to awaken out of security, by first making manifest his favour to them.*

And, besides, I would observe, that in Jer. iii. the prophecy is not concerning the recovery of backsliding saints or the mystical church, which, though she had corrupted herself, still continued to be God's wife: it is concerning apostate Israel, that had forsaken and renounced her husband, and gone after other lovers, and whom God had renounced, put away, and given her a bill of divorce, (ver. 8.) so that her recovery could not be by giving her assurance of her good estate as still remaining his wife, and that God was already married unto her, for that was not true, and is not consistent with the context. And whereas it is said, ver. 14. "Return, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you, and I will take you one of a city," &c. *I am married,* in the Hebrew, is in the preterperfect tense; but you know, Sir, that in the language of prophecy, the pretertense is very commonly put for the future; and whereas it is said, ver. 19. "How shall I put thee among the children? And I said, Thou shalt call me, My father." I acknowledge this expression here, my Father, and that Rom. viii. 15. is the language of faith. It is so two ways: 1st, It is such language of the soul as is the immediate effect of a lively faith. I acknowledge, that the lively exercises of faith do naturally produce satisfaction of a good state *as their immediate effect.* 2d, It is language which, in another sense, does properly and naturally express the very act of faith itself, yea, the first act of faith in a sinner, before which he never was in a good state. As thus, supposing a man in distress, pursued by his enemies that sought his life, should have the gates of several fortresses set open before him, and should be called to from each of them to fly thither for refuge; and viewing them all, and one appearing strong and safe, but the rest insufficient, he should accept the invitation to that one, and fly thither with this language: "This is my fortress; this is my refuge. In vain is salvation looked for from the other. Behold I come to thee; this is my sure defence." Not that he means that he is already within the fortress, and so in a good estate. But this is my chosen fortress, in the strength of which I trust, and to which I betake myself for safety. So if a woman were at once to be solicited by many lovers, to give herself to them in a married state, and beholding the superior excellencies of one far above all the rest, should betake herself to him, with this language: "This is my husband, behold I come unto thee, thou art my spouse." Not that she means that she is already married to him, but that he is her chosen husband, &c. Thus God offers himself to sinners as their Saviour, God and Father; and the language of the heart of him that accepts the offer by active faith, is, "Thou art

* This is evident by many scriptures; as, Lev. xxvi. 40–42. Deut. xxxiii. 36–39. 1 Kings viii. 21, 22. chap. i. 4–8. Ezek. xv. 35–37. Hos. v. 15. with chap. vi. 1–3. chap. xiii. 9, 10. chap. xix. throughout.

my Saviour; in vain is salvation hoped for from others that offer themselves. Thou art my God and Father." Not that he is already his child, but he chooses him, and comes to him, that he may be one of his children; as in Jer. iii. 19. Israel calls God his Father, as the way to be *put among the children*, and to be one of them, and not as being one already; and in ver. 21–23. she is not brought out of a careless and secure state by knowing that the Lord is her God, but she is first brought to consideration and sense of her sin and misery, weeping and supplications for mercy, and conviction of the vanity of other saviours and refuges, not only before she has assurance of her good estate, but before she is brought to fly to God for refuge, that she may be in a good estate.

As to the instance of Job, I would only say this: I think, while in his state of sore affliction, though he had some great exercises of infirmity and impatience under his extreme trials, yet he was very far from being in such a frame as I intended, when I spoke of a *secure, careless, carnal* frame, &c. I doubt not, nor did I ever question it, that the saints' hope and knowledge of their good state, is, in many cases, of excellent benefit to help them against temptation and the exercises of corruption.

With regard to the case of extraordinary temptation, and buffeting of Satan, which you mention, I do not very well know what to say farther. I have often found my own insufficiency as a counsellor in such like cases, wherein melancholy and bodily distemper have so great a hand, and give Satan so great advantage, as appears to me in the case you mention. If the Lord do not help, whence should we help? If some Christian friends of such afflicted, and, as it were, possessed persons, would, from time to time, pray and fast for them, it might be a proper exercise of Christian charity, and the likeliest way I know for relief.—I kept no copy of my former letter to you, and so do not remember fully what I have already said concerning this case. But this I have often found with such melancholy people, that the greatest difficulty does not lie in giving them good advice, but in persuading them to take it. One thing I think of great importance, which is, that such persons should go on in a steady course of performance of all duties, both of their general and particular calling, without suffering themselves to be diverted from it by any violence of Satan, or specious pretence of his whatsoever, properly ordering, proportioning, and timing all sorts of duties, duties to God, public, private and secret, and duties to man, relative duties, of business and conversation, family duties, duties of friendship and good neighbourhood, duly proportioning labour and rest, intentness and relaxation, without suffering one duty to crowd out or intrench upon another. If such persons could be persuaded to this, I think, in this way, they would be best guarded against the devil, and he would soonest be discouraged, and a good state of body would be most likely to be gained, and persons would act most as if they trusted and rested in God, and would be most in the way of his help and blessing.

With regard to what you write concerning immediate revelations, I have thought of it, and I find I cannot say any thing to purpose, without drawing out this letter to a very extraordinary length, and I am already got to such a length, that I had need to ask your excuse. I have written enough to tire your patience.

It has indeed been with great difficulty that I have found time to write much. If you knew my extraordinary circumstances, I doubt not, you would excuse my not writing any more. I acknowledge the subject you mention is very important. Probably if God spares my life, and gives me opportunity, I may write largely upon it. I know not how Providence will dispose of me, I am going to be cast on the wide world, with my large family of ten children.—I humbly request your prayers for me under my difficulties and trials.

As to the state of religion in this place and this land, it is at present very sorrowful and dark. But I must, for a more particular account of things, refer you to my letter to Mr. M'Laurin, of Glasgow, and Mr. Robe. So, asking a remembrance in your prayers, I must conclude, by subscribing myself, with much esteem and respect,

Your obliged brother and Servant,

JONATHAN EDWARDS.

P. S. *July* 3, 1750. Having had no leisure to finish the preparation of my letters to Scotland before this time, by reason of the extraordinary troubles, hurries and confusions of my unusual circumstances, I can now inform you, that the controversy between me and my people, that I mentioned in the beginning of my letter, has issued in a separation. An ecclesiastical council was called on the affair, who sat here the week before last, who, by a majority of one voice, determined an immediate separation to be necessary; and accordingly my pastoral relation to my people was dissolved on June 22. If I can procure the printed accounts from Boston of the proceedings of the council, I will give order to my friend there to inclose them with this letter, and direct them to you.—I desire your prayers, that I may take a suitable notice of the frowns of heaven on me and this people, (between whom was once so great a union,) in bringing to pass such a separation between us; and that these troubles may be sanctified to me, that God would overrule this event for his own glory, (which doubtless many adversaries will rejoice and triumph in,) that God would open a door for my future usefulness, and provide for me and my numerous family, and take a fatherly care of us in our present unsettled uncertain circumstances, being cast on the wide world. J. E.

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